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New York

President: Mr. Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Stagno Ugarte (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I can assure you that my delegation will support you unconditionally so that together we can achieve a successful outcome. I should like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the delegation of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group.

Costa Rica considers that disarmament, demilitarization and the reduction of military spending constitute an important step towards peace. Reducing military arsenals limits opportunities to resort to violence and makes it possible to allocate greater resources to social development programmes.

Along these lines, we are gratified to note that achievements have been made in the Central American region in terms of reducing armed forces and military arsenals. Two States in the area have already abolished their armies — Costa Rica in 1948 and, more recently, Panama, in 1990.

The Nicaraguan proposal on a programme to limit and control arms in Central America, designed to bring about an appropriate balance of power and to promote stability, mutual confidence and transparency, which was adopted by the Central American presidents at the Belize summit on 4 September last, is yet another sign of our region's strong commitment to disarmament. In addition, the Treaty of Tlatelolco has already been ratified by all the States of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Despite the progress made in our region, we note with discouragement that the Disarmament Commission in Geneva is deadlocked; that there has been no progress in the implementation of the 13 steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); that there was no agreement in the working groups of the Disarmament Commission; and that no consensus was reached during the fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

We note with concern the deadlock in terms of disarmament in certain regions of the world. We urge States genuinely to commit themselves to disarmament negotiations and thus to achieve important agreements in this respect that will put them all on the path to genuine disarmament — including conventional weapons as well as weapons of mass destruction.

We urge States that possess nuclear weapons to take concrete and credible steps in terms of negotiating nuclear disarmament. We appeal to all States to renounce developing new nuclear weapons and to

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ratify the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In this context, we would like to highlight the fact that each article of the NPT is binding at all times and in all circumstances for the 188 States parties, and that the international community cannot tolerate anything less than full and strict compliance with these obligations. It seems unacceptable to us that a few States are preventing those treaties from becoming universal because they are giving priority to their particular interests over the general interest.

We should like to express our support for the two draft resolutions that will be presented by the New Agenda Coalition: "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: a new agenda", and "Reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons".

We would like to appeal to all delegations to support the draft resolution on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

My country is in favour of a complete ban on the transfer of weapons to all terrorist groups as well as to those groups and Governments that commit massive and systematic human rights violations or which flout international humanitarian law.

That is why the Government of Costa Rica, with a group of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Nobel Peace Prize winners and qualified lawyers, has drafted the framework for a convention on international arms transfers. The draft tries to adequately codify the obligations of States under existing international law, including humanitarian international law and human rights law, with regard to regulating arms transfers. We hope that it will become a model for internationally binding agreements that, once adopted by States, will open the way to concrete and concerted action to regulate arms transfers.

Multilateralism is the only avenue to general and complete disarmament. It is the basic principle of all disarmament negotiations and negotiations on non-proliferation. That is why Costa Rica reiterates its commitment to promoting the disarmament agenda.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Sir, I associate myself with previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and in wishing you every success. I also extend our congratulations to the Vice-Chairmen and the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that, with the cooperation of the Bureau, you will lead our Committee to success. My delegation will do its utmost to cooperate in order to achieve the desired objectives.

I also extend our thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament for his commendable efforts in the service of disarmament, and for his comprehensive statement at the opening of the general debate, in which he touched upon various questions and issues on the Committee's agenda.

Everybody looks forward to a world free of the notorious weapons of mass destruction, a world in which successive generations live in peace and security, not threatened with total extinction by some extremist countries and terrorist groups, a world in which there is an end to the feverish arms race and the production and development of weapons of mass destruction that target humankind and its diverse cultures and social backgrounds.

We meet annually under this roof, most of us hoping to narrow the differences between us and arrive at agreed solutions to questions of international peace and security. Since we represent the peoples of the world, it is our humanitarian and moral duty to arrive at common formulas to save mankind from total annihilation by weapons of mass destruction. It is thoroughly regrettable that some States possessing such prohibited weapons still insist on keeping them and developing them. These States, especially the major Powers, want to monopolize such weapons but not allow their proliferation, under the pretext that this would potentially be devastating to mankind. It is a strange equation, which it is difficult to understand and accept. My delegation would like States possessing such weapons to voluntarily give them up, as South Africa did, setting an example in this regard. Possession of weapons of mass destruction is a kind of terrorism and muscle-flexing by States to subjugate neighbouring or competitor States. It is the worst thing developed by humankind, and has the potential to destroy all of us.

Regarding the threat of weapons of mass destruction, I refer agenda item 70, "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East." The region is in crisis due to the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories in Palestine and Syria and the resulting imbalance of power in favour of

Israel. As in previous sessions, at its fifty-seventh session the General Assembly urged all parties in the Middle East to consider seriously taking the practical and urgent steps required for the implementation of the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The Assembly also called upon all countries of the region that have not yet done so to agree to place their nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

All States in the area have responded positively to these proposals and acceded to the relevant conventions, except for the State of Israel; it is still outside the realm of accountability and international pressures exerted by the international community, which clearly deals selectively with some States and lacks true credibility. This double standard is totally unacceptable.

Since we are talking about the importance of eliminating weapons of mass destruction, I must state that chemical and biological weapons, small arms and light weapons, landmines and booby traps, all constitute a continuous threat to man, his survival and sustainable development. This is especially true if no control is exercised. There is an urgent need to focus on implementing the treaties relating to such weapons. We feel that this is very important, and we encourage all States to accede to the conventions governing their possession. We also call upon the States that manufacture such weapons not to abuse the loopholes in the treaties or items not covered by conventions.

Because of Qatar's commitment to international conventions and instruments, my Government decided in July 2003 to endorse Qatar's accession to the 1980 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We had already acceded to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. We call upon all States that have not yet acceded to such treaties to promptly sign and accede to them in the service of United Nations purposes.

The principle of confidence-building should guide States and Governments in controlling the arms race. Mistrust and fear of others prompt States to compete against each other in pursuit of the most sophisticated modern weapons. My delegation feels that the best way to control the arms race is to seek solutions to intractable political problems in the world and to prevail upon contending parties to resort to dialogue and solve their problems politically as soon as possible, before situations deteriorate. We also believe that trust can be gained by giving priority to economic issues over political issues in areas of tension in the world. The attempt to link States to each other through strong economic relations enhances peace and security. The stronger the economic ties, the stronger the political relations.

Mr. Choisuren (Mongolia): I join previous speakers in extending my delegation's warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman, and, through you, to the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you discharge your duties for the successful conclusion of the Committee's work.

I also take this opportunity to welcome Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe and wish him every success in his important new post.

To say that we are meeting at an important juncture in international relations does not fully convey the urgency of the problems confronting us. Global military expenditure is expected to greatly exceed the cold-war-era record, reaching an incredible $1 trillion, at a time when hunger and poverty continue to plague more than half of the world's population.

No progress has been made in reducing the arsenals of weapons of mass destruction and curbing their spread. Such weapons and the means of their delivery continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. The tragic events of 11 September 2001 highlighted the dangers that may arise from the spread of weapons of mass destruction, with the prospect that non-State actors and terrorist groups may have access to those horror weapons.

We consider that this is not the time to debate whether non-proliferation or global nuclear disarmament should be accorded the highest priority in our quest for a safer world, free from the fear of annihilation. A move in the right direction on both fronts would bring us closer to the cherished goal of general and complete disarmament. However, my delegation believes that at present the most important

task is to secure strict observance and effective implementation of all international disarmament agreements — first of all, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Without such a commitment and full compliance, the Millennium Declaration Goals of freeing peoples from the scourge of war and eliminating the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction will remain declarations of good intent.

My Government firmly believes that nuclear disarmament is the key not only to solving a wide range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues, but also to maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. In this context, my delegation attaches special importance to universal adherence to the NPT and preservation of its integrity. We share the view that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the foundation for further concerted efforts towards nuclear disarmament. We also underline the importance of achieving universality of the Treaty, and join others in calling upon those States outside the Treaty to accede to it as soon as possible. The creeping retreat from nuclear disarmament, to which a number of speakers have alluded, whether in the form of a revision of military doctrine that lowers the threshold for the possible use of nuclear weapons or of the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, should not erode the NPT's credibility and effectiveness.

In the light of recent challenges to the NPT and to the non-proliferation regime, our most urgent task now is to secure full compliance with, and universal adherence to, the Treaty, and to strengthen it. To demonstrate the seriousness of our commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the international community as a whole, and first and foremost the nuclear-weapon States, must take more concrete and practical steps. Any measure by the nuclear-weapon States aimed at the drastic reduction and eventual elimination of their nuclear arsenals would make a genuine and tangible contribution to the cause of disarmament. In this context, Mongolia attaches great importance to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the 13 steps adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which is rightly considered to be the blueprint to achieve nuclear disarmament.

In short, urgent measures to stop further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction should be taken, inspection regimes should be strengthened, and verification of the implementation of the relevant provisions of the disarmament treaties should be enforced rigorously.

Our delegation considers the international safeguards system, including the additional protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to be an important pillar of the global non-proliferation regime, and joins in the call on all States that have not done so to sign the protocol.

My country welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions. Its implementation, representing the largest-ever reduction in nuclear forces, will be an important step towards nuclear disarmament.

In the opinion of my delegation, concrete measures could be taken, for a number of reasons, to develop a more effective control regime over tactical nuclear weapons and to reduce non-strategic nuclear weapons. According to a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research study, tactical nuclear weapons are vulnerable to theft or unauthorized use because of their forward basing and frequently inadequate physical protection. They could become a very attractive target for non-State actors seeking to gain access. Possible measures to reinforce the control regime include reaffirmation by the United States and Russia of their continued commitment to their 1991-92 universal declarations; strengthening the informal tactical nuclear weapons regime by more legal instruments; and introducing transparency.

My delegation, like many others, would like to see the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and calls upon all States that have not yet become parties to the Treaty to accede to it as soon as possible. I refer in particular to those States whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force.

My delegation attaches special importance to the negotiation of a universal and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Two years ago the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia proposed at a meeting of the Conference on Disarmament that, pending the negotiations on the

fissile materials cut-off treaty, the nuclear-weapon States should declare a moratorium on the production of weapons-grade fissile materials and promote greater transparency through disclosure of their present stocks. He also urged the United Nations to establish a register for all stocks of weapons-grade fissile material.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely reached among the States of the regions concerned constitutes an important non-proliferation measure, which enhances regional peace and security and promotes nuclear disarmament. The number of States covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones has now exceeded 100. My country warmly welcomed the five Central Asian States' agreement to conclude a treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In conjunction with Mongolia's properly institutionalized nuclear-weapon-free status, this new treaty will establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this vast and volatile region, thus making a valuable contribution to the cause of turning Central Asia into a zone of peace and predictability.

Mongolia, together with the relevant United Nations bodies, is working to find ways for the proper institutionalization of its nuclear-weapon-free status. I take this opportunity to thank Member States and relevant United Nations bodies for their steadfast support and assistance.

While there have been setbacks in priority areas of nuclear disarmament and related issues, progress has been made on a number of issues, such as the successful conclusion of the First Review Conference of the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which now enjoys close to universal adherence. The destruction of declared stocks of chemical weapons is ongoing, and the verification regime of the CWC has demonstrated its credibility. Though the efforts to negotiate an instrument to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention have not been successful, the follow-up process raises hope that ways to improve compliance with the Convention can be developed.

Mongolia also welcomes the adoption of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, which we regard as an important initial step towards the creation of a legal norm in this field.

Increasing awareness of the danger of the excessive use of small arms and light weapons, with its devastating impact on national and human security, political stability and economic and social development, has prompted States to take concrete actions, individually and collectively, to implement the Programme of Action of the 2001 United Nations Conference on small arms. One important initiative related to this issue is the effort to establish an effective instrument to regulate and control the flow of small arms and light weapons. Launching the negotiation process to work out an international instrument for tracing small arms and light weapons could constitute an important breakthrough in preventing, combating and eliminating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in small arms.

Before concluding, I would like to say that my delegation shares the view that the working methods of the Committee need streamlining, that we need a balanced agenda which faithfully reflects our priorities, and that our work should be focused on the most important goals which require immediate attention and action. In this context, we share the view that non-compliance with or inadequate implementation of existing arms control and Non-Proliferation Treaty regimes should be one the main issues the First Committee could deal with.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): Let me extend my warm congratulations on your election, Sir. You can count on our support in making this a most productive session.

As the General Assembly forum entrusted with consideration of security and disarmament issues, this Committee must acknowledge that the world is as full of challenges to the non-proliferation and disarmament order as it is of manifestations of the benefits that order has provided for humankind. As custodians of an edifice built up over decades, we must be vigilant in ensuring the integrity of the structure and its relevance to current conditions. This requires preventive maintenance, as well as the occasional renovation and new addition. There is no substitute, however, for the basic norms and commitments embodied in this multilateral structure. Without its shelter, we would all be more vulnerable to the blasts of the threat or use of force.

The challenges are evident. The withdrawal of a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a bitter setback to the enterprise to make that keystone of our nuclear-free construction a universal one. Similarly, it is discouraging to see States sacrifice their treasure to the

false gods of nuclear armament at the cost of human development or to consider devising new types of nuclear weapons and applications, rather than to concentrate on their progressive and systematic elimination. There is no escaping the reality that premising security on the existence of nuclear weapons is a dangerous approach, fraught with the risk of annihilation. The sooner we add nuclear arms to the scrap heap of weapons of mass destruction, the better. In addition to the dangers of State use of weapons of mass destruction, we must also now confront the risk of use by terrorists or other non-State actors. The only sure solution to this problem is ensuring the elimination of weapons of mass destruction according to international law.

At the same time, as we face up to the challenges, we should also recognize and celebrate the progress that has been registered in non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament forums since we last met in this Committee. There have been important new adherents to the central non-proliferation and disarmament conventions. We have witnessed the launch of a significant new Code Of Conduct to start addressing the major role that ballistic missiles play in our security environment. The second annual meeting of The Hague Code subscribers took place here only last week. United Nations Register of Conventional Arms experts agreed to substantial expansions of transparency with respect to conventional arms. There was great recognition of the human dimensions associated with small arms and light weapons at the First Biennial Meeting to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, which revealed an impressive range of action at all levels and an exemplary partnership between Governments and civil society in coming to grips with this hydra-headed problem. A legal instrument under the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects to deal with the pressing issue of explosive remnants of war appears close at hand. A fifth meeting of States parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction revealed ever-growing support for the eradication of anti-personnel landmines. A constructive exchange on national practices relevant to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction occurred this summer and we expect to see further action to strengthen that critical prohibition at next month's annual meeting. There are even fresh signs of responsible compromise and an emerging consensus that would permit the Conference on Disarmament to resume productive work.

(*spoke in French*)

Without diminishing an iota from the seriousness of the threats and challenges to our enterprise that confront us, I think it is necessary to remind our publics and ourselves of the progress that is being made in domains affecting human security worldwide.

This Committee provides a unique opportunity for the entire membership to set out its views on the security and disarmament agenda of the day. This takes many forms, from national statements to interventions during thematic debate to formal resolutions. It is incumbent on those who value the importance of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in global affairs to make optimal use of the time allotted to our work here. The First Committee can count on the support of my delegation in trying to reduce and rationalize the workload and to improve the quality and utility of the discussions during this session. We will have specific suggestions to put forward during our dedicated exchange on the Committee's working methods.

(*spoke in English*)

We hope to set an example in trying to minimize the "laundry list" nature of national statements in favour of providing more subject-specific commentary during the thematic debate. In this way, it may be possible to have a more meaningful discussion of key disarmament matters during our session and ideally to yield something richer than a litany of national positions or a mechanistic output of resolutions. In the end, we will be measured by action to achieve our common non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament goals, not by the number of resolutions adopted.

Canada is committed to playing an active role in promoting non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament across a wide spectrum of sectors. We are determined to strengthen the prohibitions against weapons of mass destruction, to reinforce the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, to advance the

promising conventional arms control agenda and to contribute to the efficacy of United Nations and multilateral machinery in the entire field. We must squarely face up to the dangers that non-compliance poses to the integrity of our regimes and develop more effective measures to deter, detect and reverse such behaviour. In doing so, we must look to improve our compliance and verification mechanisms creatively, both within the treaty framework and in the broader United Nations context.

In addition to ensuring the efficacy of the existing instruments and measures, we will continue to explore possibilities for preventive diplomacy in the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament realm to preclude the introduction of arms and adversarial attitudes into new environments. Outer space is one such realm, in which humanity has an increasing stake in maintaining a non-threatening, non-weaponized environment.

In all our endeavours, Canada will continue to forge partnerships with civil society and the private sector in realizing our common security goals. We live in a global village, in which insecurity in one quarter, if ignored, will eventually undermine security elsewhere. The widely held goals of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament will be fully realized only when we focus on international cooperation and our collective responsibility to implement and promote an effective, rules-based, multilateral security system.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The environment in which humankind lives is dynamic and mutable, but the principles and values that rule human nature are stable and permanent. Therefore, in the face of fear and challenges to its security, humankind has envisaged and elaborated various ways of protecting itself and of moving away from imperfect and fragile unilateral initiatives towards more complex mechanisms of defence, elaborated with the collective character of such problem in mind.

It is to that collective spirit that we must, while aware of the inherent limitations of unilateralism, appeal again today. Global security is indivisible, and therefore must be the responsibility of all.

To attempt to define the current political situation in terms of security is largely meaningless. The very fact that we are gathered here today clearly shows the need to perfect this multilateral framework for security; that perfection continues, unfortunately, to be elusive in many ways, whether in traditional areas or in terms of the new challenges that are appearing. We must take advantage of this forum to regain the spirit of compromise and the negotiating spirit through which we can revive the political will and determination which enabled us to agree on all the existing instruments, political will and determination which we seem to have lost.

It is contradictory to demand that the United Nations act, commit itself, supervise and monitor events, while denying it the necessary resources and tools. This contradiction explains to a considerable extent the deadlock in negotiations in the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, which may well also occur in a possible special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. This deadlock is of great concern to Uruguay, because, in a world in which there is already talk of a second nuclear generation, it really means going backwards.

There is a similar deadlock with regard to the main legal instruments that we have created. The failure to achieve universality of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which remains the fundamental tool for denuclearization, and the delay in the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) seem to show that here at the United Nations we discuss topics that are not matters of priority or urgency. We all know that this is not right, and that it is imperative that we move forward to ensure that existing treaties are completely effective and fully observed. We must also renew the political will required for that to happen.

In that connection, Uruguay draws attention to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, which, although outside the United Nations ambit, has quickly been recognized as an important demonstration of political will. Through the Code, more than 100 countries, including Uruguay, have created a space in which to handle a topic whose importance does not have to be highlighted.

Uruguay's experience in its own region has been encouraging. We are members of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) zone of peace and part of the planet's first nuclear-weapon-free zone on the planet. We knew that these achievements were possible, because we believe that global security is possible; we have promoted it at the national, subregional and regional levels, and seek to do so at

the global level. This is why, as I said at the beginning of my statement, we appeal for a return to the spirit of compromise. We need to see how we can, together, consolidate a global disarmament and security system, which, after all, was one of the main purposes for which the United Nations was created.

Finally, I would like to say that Uruguay fully supports the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group, and that during this structured debate my country will intervene on behalf of MERCOSUR at appropriate times.

Mr. Biyira (Ghana): I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee at the fifty-eighth session. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership and guidance this session will come to a successful conclusion. You can count on the fullest cooperation of my delegation in the task ahead.

The proliferation of light weapons and illicit arms trafficking in the world today constitutes a grave menace to the stability, peace and sustainable development of Africa, particularly in the West African subregion. Although they do not in themselves cause the conflicts and criminal activities in which they are used, their wide availability, accumulation and illicit flows, especially in conflict zones, tend to escalate conflicts, undermine peace agreements, intensify violence, impede economic and social development and hinder the development of social stability.

According to available statistics, there are more than 500 million light weapons in circulation around the world, beyond the control of States, with 30 million of them in Africa and 8 million in West Africa alone. There are also an estimated 10,000 mercenaries on the African continent. The easy availability of small arms and mercenaries has helped generate and prolong conflict situations in West Africa.

My delegation believes that this problem should be addressed by tightening legal controls on the manufacture, transfer, dealing, brokering and possession of firearms and ammunition, including those in the possession of States. A useful approach would be to increase international transparency of the licit trade and to strengthen national legislation governing the arms trade and possession of weapons.

Now that the conflict in Liberia is under control, we should pay attention to the urgent need to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, for nowhere have the damaging consequences of such weapons been felt more than in Liberia and the Mano River Union countries, where they have done so much harm to innocent people and property.

Ghana would like to cooperate with the international community in order to identify ways in which we can prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. Illicit brokering plays a key role in facilitating illegal transfers of arms to groups that are prevented from buying them legally — such as embargoed States and groups, insurgents, organized criminals and terrorists.

Arms-producing States should establish a formal register of arms brokers. We see a register as a very useful way of keeping arms brokers informed of their responsibilities. Also the ability to strike people or companies from the register would be a very strong signal to them that, wherever they are operating, Governments would be able to effectively monitor and control their activities to ensure that they are in the best interests of Africa's people.

My delegation participated in the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July in New York. At this meeting, we reported on our national position and our efforts to curb this scourge to humanity. We agree with the Chairperson's summary that "The problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is multidimensional" and that it therefore "requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach covering all its thematic aspects, incorporating national, regional and global dimensions". (*A/CONF.192/BMS/2003/1, annex*)

My delegation is also proud to have been associated with the work of the 2003 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. For the first time since its establishment in 1992, the Group reached agreement on significant technical adjustments to some categories of conventional arms.

However, in spite of all efforts by the Government of Ghana to implement the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, much is yet to be achieved. We are therefore hopeful

that the international donor community will provide the necessary financial and technical assistance required to enable Ghana to fulfil its security and developmental obligations in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) subregion.

On regional disarmament, it is my delegation's view that since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action in 2001 there has been a growing need for development of a regional perspective to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Consequently, regional initiatives, especially in Africa, have begun to take shape, with regional organizations taking a comprehensive approach in dealing with issues of mutual concern, including ways and means to combat terrorism, transnational crimes and trafficking in drugs.

Non-nuclear-weapon States continue to make compromises and to take concrete steps aimed at achieving the universality of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and at giving credence to its provisions. Since the NPT Review and Extension Conference of April 1995, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, established by the Pelindaba Treaty, has become a reality, as has the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, established by the Bangkok Treaty. Those two treaties, together with the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty of Rarotonga and the Antarctic Treaty, have prepared the ground for a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, which we hope will be supported and respected by all, including the nuclear-weapon States, in order to safeguard the NPT's credibility and integrity. We hope that, in the very near future, all other countries will take practical steps to establish their own nuclear-weapon-free zones in pursuit of the objectives of the NPT, which we share with almost all the States of the region. That will make the world a safe and more secure place for all of us to live in.

Mr. Baichorov (Belarus): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, I congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to the post of Chairman of the First Committee. You can count on our support and cooperation as you carry out your work.

This year, the international authority of the United Nations was seriously tested by events in Iraq. Small and vulnerable States' confidence in the United Nations system was not strengthened. Furthermore, trends towards the intensification of international tension in various regions, accompanied by a decreased United Nations role in conflict resolution, resulted in the accelerated formation and consolidation of regional and subregional military-political alliances and organizations. Many States now consider participation in such alliances to be a prerequisite for their security.

Today, the system of international relations in the context of international security, arms control and disarmament is going through a period of crisis and needs to be reformed.

In this connection, the Belarusian delegation supports the proposals of the United States and other nations with regard to the need to adapt the First Committee's agenda to new realities, on the basis that the United Nations, as the leading universal international Organization, should elaborate a clear-cut list of top priorities for the maintenance of international security and generate programmes to overcome concrete problems and real threats to mankind. Resolutions that are adopted should contain direct instructions to existing forums and structures in the field of international security, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. That is the only way in which we can prevent the devaluation of notions such as peace, security and stability, and truly make our world more secure.

We believe that a positive approach by the First Committee could revive the activity of a number of forums in the field of arms control and disarmament. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a most important instrument providing the international community with a consistent programme of action in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Belarus supports the active work of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference.

The Republic of Belarus supports the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome the conclusions of the Vienna Conference on facilitating its entry into force which gave a new political impulse to the process of ratifying the Treaty and to the consolidation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Belarus calls upon all States which are not yet parties to the CTBT to accede to it without delay. We welcome, in particular, the intention of China to continue its ratification process.

One of the most important issues is the prohibition of the production of fissile material for

nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The Conference on Disarmament must start negotiations on this problem as soon as possible.

The military use of outer space should also be subject to international legal regulation. The international community must ban the deployment of offensive weapons in space.

Belarus believes that the process of nuclear disarmament must be complemented by concrete steps to consolidate the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Those steps should include strengthening existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and setting up new ones.

The Republic of Belarus is pursuing a responsible and consistent foreign policy aimed at fulfilling its international commitments, including its commitments under the NPT, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Intermediate-Range and Short-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Last year, Belarus joined other States in adopting the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC). We would now like to see the establishment of a relationship between HCOC and the United Nations in order to explore more comprehensive approaches to address this problem.

Proof of the consistency of our policy is further shown by the fact that the Republic of Belarus recently deposited with the Secretary-General instruments of accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention. In compliance with the Convention's provisions, our country has to destroy its landmine stockpiles within four years. Belarus requires considerable financial and technological resources to ensure the elimination of more than 4 million anti-personnel mines, inherited after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Before acceding to the Convention, Belarus had on its own destroyed more than 100,000 landmines.

It should be noted that conventional anti-personnel mines can be disposed of either by incineration or by open detonation; however, because of ecological concerns, those methods cannot be applied to mines containing liquid explosives — and we have 3.6 million. Under these circumstances, we appeal to Governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations to assist the Republic of Belarus in its stockpile elimination effort. All technical, technological and financial assistance will be warmly welcomed.

Belarus supports the expansion of transparency measures in armaments, and regularly submits data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We also submit information about the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, in accordance with resolution 56/24 V, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

We attach special importance to developing confidence-building measures at the regional and bilateral levels, as that is one of the priorities of our foreign policy. The Republic of Belarus has made an important contribution to the consolidation of regional security by implementing a strategy aimed at setting up a belt of good-neighbourliness, important components of which are agreements on complementary confidence- and security-building measures.

In conclusion, I express my hope that the international community will develop reliable mechanisms to counter new risks and threats to our common security. Having demonstrated more than once its adherence to a comprehensive disarmament policy, the Republic of Belarus will continue to remain an active participant in this process.

Mr. Musambachime (Zambia): My delegation is particularly happy to see you, Sir, Ambassador of Finland, with which Zambia enjoys close relations, presiding over the Committee's deliberations during the fifty-eighth session. I congratulate you on your well-deserved election as Chairman. Given your professional skills and dedication to the work of the Committee, I am confident that you will steer that work to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, in whom I have great confidence. My delegation pledges to be at their full disposal as they perform their duties.

I note that the fifty-eighth session of our Committee should draw a lot of lessons from the work of the fifty-seventh session. That is as it should be, since knowledge is a cumulative phenomenon. My

delegation, Sir, therefore wishes to commend your predecessor, Mr. Matiya Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda, for the manner in which he led the work of the Committee during the fifty-seventh session. His achievements are a strong foundation on which the current session should build.

I welcome and congratulate Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment as the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. I am confident that, given his vast experience and diplomatic skills, Ambassador Abe will consolidate the achievements of the former Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, in promoting global disarmament.

Over the past four years, threats to international peace and security have been exacerbated not only by the failure of the international community to prevent potential conflicts, but to a large extent by the inability of the disarmament machinery to reach consensus on a comprehensive agenda for disarmament. As stated by Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe in his opening statement at this session, both the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament failed to agree on recommendations and programmes of work, respectively, for the year 2003.

My delegation had hoped that the Commission would make progress in its efforts to find ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. For very similar reasons, the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament ended the first part of its 2003 session on 28 March without being able to agree on a programme of work. The problem confronting those two disarmament bodies were exacerbated by the use of force in international relations and the lack of universal support for multilateralism and, indeed, for the relevance and role of the United Nations. In the past year, the two disarmament bodies have watched hopelessly as global military expenditures rose to cold-war peak levels of over $1 trillion a year.

My delegation hopes that this Committee will enhance the package proposal by the Ambassadors of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden aimed at undoing the deadlock. Accordingly, Zambia supports the proposed creation of four ad hoc committees on negative security assurances; a session on the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; a ban on the production of fissile materials; and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The proposed special coordinators on radiological weapons and on a comprehensive programme of disarmament, including on transparency in armaments, would enhance the work of the ad hoc committees that was contained in the package proposal by the Ambassadors. Given the challenges facing global disarmament, my delegation fully agrees with the proposed package, which my Government considers to be a very significant outcome of the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

There is no doubt that the picture I have painted has affected the entire international security regime, architecture and arrangements. The international collective security architecture, built and strengthened over the decades, now offers just a minimum veneer of security. In fact, all countries stand vulnerable to one form of threat or another. Unfortunately, collectively, we are unable to escape to safety. To do so will require concerted universal efforts to strengthen existing security regimes and arrangements. There is a need, as proposed by the group of concerned ambassadors in the Conference on Disarmament, to build new security regimes to address emerging threats to international peace and security.

My delegation firmly believes that all is not lost. There are opportunities within the context of multilateralism to strengthen the existing international security regimes. A new regime would address threats arising from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In order for the disarmament and non-proliferation agendas to succeed, the international community must strengthen the existing monitoring and enforcement arrangements that were foreseen in all the disarmament agreements and conventions, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Guaranteeing the world a stable international environment requires the primary role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security to be recognized, strengthened and supported by all Member States. It is therefore only the United

Nations that can comprehensively monitor and verify compliance with the international agreements and conventions on which the international security architecture currently rests. Furthermore, a strengthened Security Council has a greater capacity for confidence-building in all areas where threats to peace exist.

Through the United Nations as a whole, it is possible to effectively prevent terrorists from gaining access to weapons of mass destructions, including the rampant misuse of small arms and light weapons. The United Nations, acting through both the General Assembly and the Security Council, can give hope and save lives and property around the world.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm the role of the First Committee and the United Nations in general in strengthening the existing international security regimes architecture and arrangements. Zambia reaffirms that nuclear-weapon-free zones and the regional disarmament centres contribute to peace and stability.

My delegation sees a future in calling for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to facilitate a comprehensive review of the existing international security architecture and arrangements. A successful outcome to the special session could, once again, recreate the atmosphere of hope for peace and development in the kind of secure environment that the world was beginning to experience at the end of the cold war.

In conclusion, Zambia is prepared to participate actively in the efforts to make the First Committee more effective. The improvements in the First Committee's working methods should be undertaken in an inclusive, consultative and transparent manner, with all stakeholders in the domain of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the remarks of congratulation, recognition and support made by our chief representative in disarmament affairs, Ambassador Duarte, at the beginning of this debate.

The First Committee opens its work at a time when political uncertainty and security concerns plague the armed and the unarmed alike. There are solid grounds today for anxiety about the future of the international order. Sadly, recent events can only add to our worries. The world today faces daunting threats, or, as Secretary- General Kofi Annan has accurately pointed out, old threats in dangerous combinations.

Brazil concurs with the assessment that terrorism and the prospects of the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are prominent among contemporary threats to international peace and security. One of the most terrifying possibilities is that non-State actors might acquire and use such weapons. We must endeavour to prevent that from ever happening, while acting within accepted principles and norms of international law.

No less challenging, however, is the lack of progress, even setbacks, in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. We are seriously disappointed at signs of lack of interest in achieving concrete progress within the multilateral framework, despite multiple expressions of commitment to action.

Equally disquieting is the recent trend of shunning the multilateral approach to issues that are in essence universal. "Unfortunately, there are also worrisome signs," stated President Lula in the general debate, "of an attempt to discredit the Organization and even to divest the United Nations of its political authority." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 5*) Given the need for transparency, stability and predictability, questions of disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are more appropriately dealt with on a multilateral basis and in a treaty-based framework.

Internationally negotiated multilateral disarmament treaties have made, and should continue to make, a fundamental contribution to peace and security. In this regard, we are worried by emerging academic approaches that assume that the world now lives in a new, unique strategic scenario, and thus propose to revise the foundations of the disarmament and non-proliferation structure built by the international community over the past three decades.

The fabric of the world order depends on full observance of commitments freely undertaken. Strict compliance by all States parties with the obligations entered into in the major instruments concerning weapons of mass destruction, as well as universal adherence to them, is the sole possible assurance of a more stable and safe world. In this connection, Brazil considers the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be a key component of the international security architecture. Its universalization

and full compliance with all its provisions by all parties, including through the 13 practical steps adopted by consensus in 2000, are central to our commitment to strengthen this Treaty.

We call upon Israel, India and Pakistan to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States and to place their nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reconsider the announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and upon Iran to cooperate fully and immediately with the International Atomic Energy Agency, in resolving issues arising from the implementation of their obligations. With the same emphasis, we urge the speedy fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapon Powers under article VI of the NPT.

Strengthening the non-proliferation regime does not preclude disarmament measures leading to the complete elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, measures for which there is a pressing need. Non-proliferation alone will not dispel common security concerns, as the supply-side control of key technologies associated with the development of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is an important tool for combating their spread. However, care must be exercised, lest peaceful programmes in developing countries are arbitrarily curtailed. Without effective, verifiable and irreversible progress in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, there can be little, if any, reliable and sustainable results deriving from non-proliferation regimes.

The notion of compliance encompasses that of progress. In our view, nuclear disarmament is a fundamental pre-requisite for a consistent and coherent policy for curbing proliferation. But instead of nuclear disarmament, or at least more vigorous signs of willingness to fulfil the unequivocal undertaking agreed in 2000, we notice recent approaches favouring a broader role for nuclear weapons as part of security strategies, including new rationalizations for the use and development of new types of such weapons.

At the same time, the concept of proliferation has been somewhat blurred by efforts to confine it to the horizontal dimension, losing sight of the ever growing threat posed by the technological upgrade of weaponry — the vertical dimension of proliferation. This opens up the abhorrent prospect of the continuing development of new nuclear arms. Some of the current strategic doctrines raise the possibility of their use against non-nuclear States, even in conventional scenarios. This would open the door to what hitherto has been conceived as unthinkable, as it would lower the threshold of the actual use of nuclear weapons in war.

The threat of international terrorism and the possibility that weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of non-State actors highlight the need for the total elimination of those weapons. This is the only sure way to prevent non-State actors from acquiring them. The complexity of the debate on this issue should not excuse the retention of weapons of mass destruction by the States that possess them.

The continued paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament is an example of lack of interest and absence of political will. A deadlocked Conference on Disarmament is to no one's benefit. Brazil regards as imperative the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

Brazil firmly supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Given its non-discriminatory nature and universal scope, this Treaty represents a welcome improvement over the asymmetries prevailing in other instruments. Countries that have yet to sign and ratify it, particularly those whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force, must clearly indicate their readiness to accede to the Treaty. This political sign becomes even more important as the prospect of its early entrance into force should guide the setting up of the Treaty's International Monitoring System. There can be no formal verification regime without legally binding obligations in place.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a powerful tool to fulfil the aspiration of all peoples to a nuclear-weapon-free world. The establishment of additional such zones and the consolidation of existing ones should be actively encouraged. The five nuclear-weapon States are expected to undertake appropriate binding obligations towards such zones, and they would do well to review their reservations to the attached protocols, as in the case of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

Brazil considers the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to be of major relevance. Its implementation, however, must be conducted in strict accordance with the principles negotiated with so much hard work. We are particularly concerned over the indication that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will not be able to comply with the Convention deadline for the total destruction of existing stocks of chemical weapons. We urge possessor States parties to ensure the destruction of their arsenals, without conditions or parallelisms, in a timely manner. We also expect the CWC verification regime to remain fair and non-discriminatory. Finally, we regret that, six years after the Convention's entry into force, the States parties have yet to reach agreement on how to regulate one of its critical provisions — cooperation for peaceful purposes.

Acting against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is among Brazil's priorities. The conclusions of the First Biennial Meeting to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 were encouraging. Because of the relevance of the critical issue of tracing and marking, we consider that the international community should be prepared to adopt a legally binding instrument.

The shadow of threats to peace and security looms large at present, as the Security Council remains divided. Negotiations on disarmament and related areas are stagnating, if not moving backwards, and there are growing doubts about the political fate of the General Assembly, including the First Committee.

Nevertheless, as we review the recently concluded general debate in the General Assembly Hall and read once more the highly apposite and interesting report of the Secretary-General on the millennium decade, more encouraging trends in some key areas may also be identified. First, seldom in recent history has world public opinion given so much attention and support to the United Nations and to the values of peace, security and democracy. Secondly, there is wide agreement that the principle of multilateralism plays a central, active international role and that the United Nations serves as a needed centre for harmonizing the actions of nations, as foreseen in our Charter. Thirdly, it is now recognized that there is a compelling need to reactivate all the United Nations political mechanisms so that it may fully discharge its mandate in the field of international peace and security. Finally, to that end the proposed United Nations reform and the revitalization of the General Assembly represent historic opportunities which must be explored in depth with a view to concrete action.

In that context, it should be recalled that the Charter entrusts the General Assembly with well-defined functions and powers as regards not only disarmament and arms regulation, but also peace and security and the promotion of international political cooperation, on the understanding that the prerogatives of other principal organs of the United Nations must be fully preserved. Such a mandate has direct implications for the work of the First Committee, as the General Assembly plenary is burdened with heavy institutional and policy tasks.

Better use could be made of provisions of paragraph 4 of Article 1, paragraph 1 of Article 11 and paragraph 1.a of Article 13 of our Charter. In our view, there is room for reorganizing our agenda in a coherent, methodical way. The prevailing exclusion of some items from consideration detracts from the effectiveness of the First Committee.

In other political circumstances, this situation might have been tolerated, but today it should lead to a collective process of reflection and deliberation directed at identifying means for strengthening the multilateral approaches to political and security affairs, as well as at considering possible recommendations on the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security and on the promotion of international cooperation in the political field, as foreseen in the Charter. For sure, there will be a plurality of views on this matter. My delegation will be ready to discuss them both in this Committee and in plenary.

Brazil is totally committed to our disarmament agenda, but holds the view that the political and security potentialities of this body have not yet been put to full use. The First Committee should be repoliticized and our agenda and methods of work reorganized. This indispensable task is long overdue.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election and in assuring you of our complete cooperation as you guide the Committee's work this year. I take this occasion also to convey the Holy See's continuing appreciation for the work for peace done year after year in this United Nations setting.

If it seems impossible to have nations lay down their arms in the present set of international relationships, perhaps the reason is because we have not made sufficient preparations to give States and their leaders the assurance that security can be obtained without the never-ending development and production of arms. This means that the conditions for peace must be built first before we can enjoy the fruits of peace. The soil must be nourished before the blossom appears.

That is why the work done by the United Nations and its agencies in building a culture of peace is so important. If we are to aspire to general and complete disarmament, we must first show respect for life and the dignity and human rights of individuals; reject violence; promote freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and the acceptance of differences; and develop better understanding and harmony between ethnic, religious, cultural and social groups. This agenda is indeed vast, but if the world community does not embrace it, we will continue to suffer the ravages of war.

The main purpose of the United Nations — to maintain international peace and security — can be realized in many different ways, for it is a purpose threatened and challenged on many fronts. In his address at the opening of this session of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke of the "hard" and "soft" threats to peace faced by the United Nations. Among the hard threats are terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, while the soft threats include the persistence of extreme poverty, the disparity of income between and within societies, the spread of infectious diseases, and environmental degradation. Both types of threats are real and must be recognized by all States.

Moreover, the Secretary-General emphasized that the United Nations does not have to choose to confront one to the exclusion of the other. Indeed, the United Nations cannot do so. This need and concern for a comprehensive view of international peace and security are fully shared by the Holy See, as evidenced primarily by its teachings on the nature of the human person, human dignity and a just social order. It is from that starting point that my delegation has always addressed this Committee.

The specific focus of the First Committee is on disarmament matters, usually considered hard threats to be handled by a number of multilateral initiatives and agreements. The importance of dialogue, negotiation, diplomacy and reference to the rule of law in these proceedings cannot be overestimated. Though we have mediation and verification techniques embodied in international law, they are not being sufficiently utilized, and thus nations lapse into war. The steady application of the rule of law must be supported as the means to peace rather than constant recourse to militarism. In this regard, this Committee has a prominent role to play in insisting on standards to curb the excesses of weaponry. Such work is a direct contribution to building the conditions of peace.

Small arms ought to occupy our immediate attention, for small arms and light weapons kill more than half a million people each year. To fully address the small arms problem, there must be greater recognition that domestic laws and international policies are interdependent and that the legal and illegal markets for small arms are interrelated. Many illicit transfers start out as legal ones. In this regard, my delegation reiterates its view that attention should be focused on two important issues: State responsibility for illicit transfers and a legally-binding agreement on the international arms trade.

The vast majority of cold-war arms-control thinking relied on the concept of mutual assured destruction. Everyone knows that this deterrence concept was based on a terrifying foundation — that one bloc's security can be defended by threatening the annihilation of the other bloc's population. The horrible prospect of global nuclear warfare was thought to be enough to ensure some form of peace and security, while over time bilateral and multilateral agreements alike sought to reduce that possibility by encouraging and verifying the reduction of nuclear weapons in the world. This was made concrete in one particular case by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The end of the cold war should have seen the end of policies of mutually assured destruction, which held the world in fear, but events over the past year have led to a certain resurgence in such thinking. With it has come a real weakening of the NPT regime and of multilateral efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation. By exploiting certain loopholes in the NPT and engaging in covert proliferation activities, some States are once again banking their security on the possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons. Those steps should be alarming to everyone. As my

delegation has insisted on many previous occasions, nuclear weapons are incompatible with peace in the twenty-first century.

As Governments prepare for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the question of proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects must be addressed. In the new age of terrorism that the world has sadly entered — in which the fear of a terrorist attack with nuclear devices is present — the world community must give life to the following words, contained in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and agreed by all States parties to the Treaty:

> "the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." (*NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II), p. 15*)

The other weapons of mass destruction — chemical and biological weapons — also present serious problems. As with the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, many chemical and biological agents are used for legitimate and even beneficial purposes, but some can be easily converted into weapons-grade material, only to be bought, sold and transported without detection. Multilateral inspection agencies — such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, for nuclear materials, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, for chemicals — are vital to ensuring compliance and verification, and the lack of such an agency for the Biological Weapons Convention needs to be remedied quickly. Stringent export controls on the part of States that produce such materials would help to stem illicit transfers and to hold States more accountable for licit ones.

It is an unfortunate fact that many arms control treaties contain loopholes and weak points in terms of compliance, verification and enforcement. None of those weaknesses should, however, divert our attention from the seriousness of the threats posed by these weapons. Taking stronger enforcement measures — perhaps by developing interdiction agreements and policies among States — may be one way of making sure that international law is upheld and vindicated.

Making transparent, verifiable and irreversible reductions in offensive weapons is the most direct approach to disarmament. At the same time, however, multilateral security assurances in line with changing geopolitical realities among States and — perhaps most important — internal political reforms have been shown to eliminate the need for such weapons in the first place.

All the steps that must be taken in the disarmament process may seem overwhelming at times. But perhaps they are not so daunting if they are seen within the context of building a culture of peace, with a view to combating both the hard and soft threats to our collective peace and security and guaranteeing the survival of humanity. What is essential to fulfil the peace agenda is to change the attitude of both States and individuals. We must realize that violence is not the inevitable lot of mankind. We have already constructed the broad framework of international law and have, in the United Nations, the political instrument to implement that law.

The knowledge of the gains already achieved by humanity should fill us with hope that recourse to violence and war can be overcome by renewing a political commitment to a multilateralism based on the values of responsibility, solidarity and dialogue. The steady application of disarmament steps can indeed light the way forward.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands on a point of order.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): As this is the first time I have taken the floor in the plenary debate — although this is not a statement — I congratulate you, Sir, on your election and express my delegation's full confidence in your ability to bring the current session of the First Committee to a successful completion.

I raise a point of order to ask a question. It is now 11.30, which means that this morning we will lose one and a half hours of precious meeting time. Is that necessary, and if so, why? If I am correct, the list of speakers was closed some time ago, so the Chairman and the secretariat must be aware of all the speakers on it. It would be logical to continue to work on the basis of the list and to solicit as many speakers as possible during every part of our session.

The Chairman: I was about to touch upon the fact that this morning's list of speakers has now been exhausted.

Let me provide an answer. The list of speakers was closed on Monday night. In the light of the meetings on Monday and Tuesday, when it became

clear that member States unfortunately were not abiding by the time limit requested — 10 minutes for delegations speaking in their national capacity and 15 minutes for Member States speaking on behalf of several Member States or groups of Member States — we sensed a need to have one more meeting to see how we would proceed in terms of time management.

Today's meeting has proved that the duration of statements made by member States varies greatly. It would be very easy to plan ahead if the Bureau and the secretariat had a definite idea whether member States would abide by the request. Of course, it is ultimately the sovereign right of member States to exceed the time limit they are asked to observe. But I think that today's meeting shows that in the days ahead we will probably be able to plan better in terms of our time management.

I was about to announce, first, that, in the light of the list of speakers as it stands now, it is very likely that we will not need Friday next week; only one speaker is currently inscribed on the list of speakers for that day. Secondly, there are currently only eight speakers on the list for Thursday next week. At its meeting yesterday, the Bureau agreed that the secretariat would be asked to find out from those currently inscribed on the list of speakers for both Thursday and Friday next week, 16 and 17 October, whether they would be flexible and consider being moved ahead to another date when space seemed to be available. That will be done. Unfortunately, we were unable to do it for this morning's meeting.

Also, yesterday there were a few cancellations by speakers who had inscribed themselves on the list for yesterday, and we were not sure whether they would be moved to today or to a later date. It was not today, and therefore we ended up having only 10 speakers on the list.

This is not an exact science, and never could be, unless we knew in advance that all member States would be speaking for a certain duration. But, as I have said, we will be working on trying to make our future meetings utilize the time available more fully. The cooperation and flexibility of those member States currently inscribed on the two dates I have noted will be essential.

This brings me to another point. As I indicated at our organizational meeting, it is the intention of the Chair to convene an informal exchange of views on our working methods and general housekeeping issues, if I may use that expression, on the cusp, between the end of the general debate and the start of the thematic second phase of our work. That cusp will most likely fall towards the end of next week — certainly Friday, but, depending on how this reshuffling works out, possibly as early as Thursday. Unfortunately, I cannot now indicate exactly when it will take place — whether on Thursday or Friday. But we will certainly make every effort to have the Committee be in a position to use its time and resources in a most efficient and ultimately effective manner.

I am aware that today's meeting will fall short of the time allotted, and am somewhat unhappy about that. Having said that, I encourage delegations to use the remaining hour or more for bilateral, trilateral or multilateral consultations.

I hope that my answer was satisfactory to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): My only remaining doubt is over how flexible we are. Can we not have a number of reserve speakers, ready to speak if called upon whenever we have time left, with interpreters and everything else being paid for? Can there be more flexibility? Are there countries prepared to speak earlier because they are already in a position to do so? Those are questions that I feel have not yet been completely answered.

The Chairman: We should indeed explore what the representative of the Netherlands suggests. The Chair feels that ideally for this part of our housekeeping we should have a running list of speakers for the whole duration of the general debate. Whether that would be feasible, I cannot tell. One of the reasons for convening for an informal exchange of views is to explore exactly those kinds of questions. Whether we could have a reserve or running list of speakers is a matter on which the Bureau and the secretariat will be in the hands of member States. For that reason, I think it is important that we have an open exchange of views on our housekeeping issues toward the end of next week — an exchange of views with no preconceptions. I will request the secretariat to make soundings to that effect.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations A/C.1/58/PV.5

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

First Committee

5th meeting

Thursday, 9 October 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Jarmo Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items (*continued*)

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, the Bahamas. CARICOM delegations congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of your Bureau, on your election to guide the work of this most challenging and important Committee, and we are confident that you will guide our work to a successful conclusion. We pledge our full support and cooperation in this regard.

CARICOM delegations wish to pay tribute to the work of Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his years of dedicated service, and extend congratulations to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his recent appointment to succeed Mr. Dhanapala. We offer Mr. Abe our fullest cooperation and thank him for his introductory remarks highlighting some of the more pressing disarmament and international security issues facing the First Committee at the current session, including that of its organizational reform. CARICOM delegations also wish to pay tribute to the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their sterling work throughout the year.

A brief survey of the current climate prevailing in the disarmament and arms control arena does not inspire much confidence that we, as the Member States, are living up to our obligations contained in the Charter to preserve international peace and security. As CARICOM delegations affirmed before this body last year, the progressive reduction of armaments and the achievement of the goal of general and complete disarmament are inextricably linked to attaining and maintaining peace and security and enabling us to reach our stated goal of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The year 2003 has been one of setbacks for the multilateral disarmament regime, as confidence in critical treaties has been undermined, agreement on enhanced verification measures remains elusive, stalemate still prevails in the Conference on Disarmament and global military expenditures continue to rise. It is perhaps not surprising then that proposals have come from varied quarters to re-examine the role of this Committee in promoting the disarmament agenda. CARICOM States welcome the intention of you, Mr. Chairman, to engage in informal consultations with the members of the Committee in an effort to revitalize and rationalize the work of this Committee, in concert with the ongoing process of the revitalization of the General Assembly as a whole.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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CARICOM States are also aware that a number of delegations have undertaken bilateral consultations on this matter. We welcome the transparency and frank dialogue that have characterized the process thus far, and look forward to continuing discussions on practical and realistic ways in which to make the work of this Committee, and thus the General Assembly as a whole, have a greater impact on the global disarmament agenda and the current threats facing the international community. We wish to sound a note of caution, however, so that, in seeking to make the Committee more relevant, we do not achieve the opposite by removing certain issues from its purview or choosing to eliminate, because of a lack of progress, consideration of issues that remain unresolved.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction has been at the forefront of concerns relating to international peace and security over the past year. CARICOM States have noted with concern that some of the critical legal instruments governing the multilateral disarmament agenda have come under threat or have stalled in implementation in 2003. We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We also call on all States parties to the NPT to fully implement their obligations under article VI of the Treaty, and the commitments made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

In this context, CARICOM States also call for a renewed commitment to promoting the entry into force, and the implementation of both the letter and the spirit, of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As we are all aware, just one month ago the Third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT met to accelerate the Treaty's entry into force. Regrettably, that goal remains elusive, due to the absence of prompt signature and ratification of the CTBT by those States whose ratification is needed for its entry into force.

We applaud the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in promoting the entry into force of the Treaty, particularly its regional activities in this regard. For their part, CARICOM States participated in a regional seminar, held in Jamaica in December 2002, designed to promote universal adherence to the CTBT in the Latin American and Caribbean region. We also welcome the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the CTBTO and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) — the first of its kind for the CTBTO.

We are strongly committed to the process of regional cooperation in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. It is a source of immense satisfaction to CARICOM States that the Treaty of Tlatelolco now commands universal adherence in Latin America and the Caribbean, and CARICOM looks forward to the convening of the eighteenth session of the General Conference of OPANAL, to be held in Havana, Cuba, in November of this year. We encourage other States engaged in discussions on the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones to continue to move those processes forward in pursuit of the important goal of non-proliferation.

We, as members of the international community, have committed ourselves to the control and elimination of certain types of weapons, having recognized the indiscriminate and devastating effects that such weapons have on military and civilian populations alike. In this context, CARICOM States are committed to the enforcement of the conventions governing the development, production and use of chemical and biological weapons. In this regard, CARICOM States are also committed to the process of developing and enhancing verification arrangements governing the development, production and use of biological weapons, as a means to promote greater levels of confidence among States.

While the spectre of weapons of mass destruction hangs over us all, the international community has rightly recognized and decided to act on the growing threat posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. CARICOM States are strongly committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July 2001. It is no exaggeration to say that small arms and light weapons pose the single biggest threat to the national security and economic and social development of many of our small countries, as well as those countries in other regions of the world plagued by intra- and inter-State conflict. As stated by CARICOM delegations at that Conference and in other forums since, small arms and light weapons in our region have been used by those who

would seek to destabilize the region through criminal networks involved in the trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings. These activities pose a dangerous challenge to our security infrastructure and are helping to undermine the economic and social fabric of our nations by contributing to a rise in crime, particularly violent crime.

Faced with this multifaceted threat, CARICOM States have welcomed the degree of cooperation engaged in at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels, including through the work of the CARICOM secretariat, the Organization of American States and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, all of which have provided assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and other agreements aimed at controlling the proliferation of these weapons.

However, as acknowledged at the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in July this year, far too much remains to be done. We consider the Programme of Action a small but important first step that must be augmented by commitments to establish transfer controls in producer countries, to regulate brokering and to facilitate the reliable and harmonized marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. We also call on producer States to exercise greater levels of scrutiny of end-user certificates and border controls. As was recognized at the July meeting, no State alone can prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Utilizing the tools currently at our disposal and creating new ones will ensure that combined national and collective action will enable the international community to eradicate this deadly trade, which has already contributed to so much human tragedy.

Another issue of overriding concern to the Caribbean region remains the transhipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. While recognizing the right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear material, CARICOM countries maintain that these shipments, and the consequent potential for accidents, represent a serious threat to the economic development of our region. Accordingly, CARICOM States would support the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework to promote State responsibility with respect to disclosure, liability and compensation in the event of accidents.

It is clear that much uncertainty hangs over the current disarmament regime, as we grapple with unresolved issues and seek ways to address new threats, including the proliferation of small arms and the potential for weapons of mass destruction to pass from States into the possession of non-State actors. Thus, while engaging in discussions concerning the future work of the Committee, CARICOM States also reaffirm that the time has come to take a firm decision to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We have agreed that there are many new threats confronting us, as well as old threats that continue to haunt us. Therefore it is time to reaffirm our commitment to existing principles, as well as to agree on some new strategies to guide us as we seek to address these threats. CARICOM States are disappointed that we were unable to reach consensus this year on the objectives and agenda of the session. However, we welcome the opportunity to continue our discussions on this matter in a frank and constructive fashion.

While there is ample reason to be discouraged, it would be unacceptable for the international community to turn its back on certain disarmament issues — indeed, it would be impossible for it to do so. The previous decade was marked by increased commitments by all Member States to social and economic development. Yet, as we all know, there can be no development without security and no security without development. We must therefore redouble our efforts in implementing both sides of this equation or else we will have failed to live up to the obligations contained in the Charter.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Please allow me to congratulate you on your election to the high office of the chairmanship of the First Committee and express confidence that, under your able stewardship substantive progress will be made in addressing important issues on the agenda of this committee. I would also like to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe for his introductory remarks made at the opening meeting here.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the most serious challenges to global security. In the more than 30 years of existence of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), compliance with the nuclear disarmament obligation has turned into one of the thorniest problems, aggravated by an emerging trend to

reconsider the role of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. Many speakers here have already expressed their serious concern that the NPT has been slowly eroded as a result of weakened international commitment.

My delegation fully shares these concerns and calls for a strengthened and universal application of the existing regimes of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and believes that the current international agreements in this area should be adapted to new realities.

The United Nations and its institutions should play a vital role in solving the problem of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is actually only one direction to follow: strengthen and tighten controls over the non-proliferation regime, and improve transparency in the areas of weapons development and testing.

As the site of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, my country has first-hand knowledge of the horrendous effects of nuclear testing. Therefore, Kazakhstan calls for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). A moratorium on test explosions is a basis for nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. The CTBT's entry into force will transform that political action into a legally binding commitment and legitimize a host of measures taken by the international community in support of such a ban.

We are convinced that the establishment of new internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world is compatible with the goal to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the international non-proliferation regime, and will contribute to the strengthening of peace and security in various regions and, hence, in the entire world. As a State that voluntarily renounced its nuclear heritage, possessing at one time the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world, Kazakhstan is actively involved in negotiations to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan strongly supports efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure global nuclear safety. Reinforcement of effective mechanisms developed by the IAEA to strengthen the international system of safeguards, will further contribute to practical solutions for the problems facing the international community in this area.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Kazakhstan is strongly committed to its obligations under the Convention. We also welcome the efforts by the State parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to develop agreed mechanisms of its strengthening.

Kazakhstan is concerned by the fact that the Conference on Disarmament continues to be deadlocked and that it has failed to agree on its programme of work. As a symbol of multilateral efforts, the Conference on Disarmament must be allowed to play its mandated role and resume its substantive work. Further and more results-oriented efforts to prevent illegal production of and trafficking in small arms are no less important.

The international community should adopt coordinated measures to prevent and reduce the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms, which undermine efforts to ensure indivisible and comprehensive security. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its aspects, adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on this issue, represents an unprecedented high-level effort to achieve an international consensus on how to address this problem.

It is crucially important to develop and implement agreed international measures to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in and manufacture of small arms and light weapons and to reduce their excessive and destabilizing accumulation throughout the world. We believe that the United Nations should play a leading role in this process.

Kazakhstan supports the provisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We express confidence that this document will make a considerable contribution to global efforts to implement the United Nations Conference's Programme of Action.

Kazakhstan supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms by providing information on a regular basis, since 1992, and considers the Register the most important component of the export control system. This year, Kazakhstan provided information and data to the Register on military expenditures for fiscal year 2002. We welcome the broadest possible

participation of United Nations Member States in this important international instrument, which should contribute to the efforts to ensure international peace and security.

We are also in favour of another transparency measure taken by the United Nations — the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures — and sponsored a draft resolution on this issue in the First Committee.

Export control over nuclear material, equipment, dual-use technologies and weapons is an important element of nuclear non-proliferation policy because of the danger of possible access by non-State actors to materials used to produce weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, Kazakhstan considers it important to strengthen its national export control system. We also believe that expanded cooperation between States to improve export control systems is a very effective way to counter international terrorism. Such cooperation can be especially meaningful at the regional level.

Taking this into account, Kazakhstan hosted last June the seventh non-proliferation and export control forum of the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, attended also by representatives of other countries and international organizations. The participants in the forum developed interaction mechanisms for use with customs officials, border guards and other services in order to prevent diversion of dual-use technologies, materials and know-how, which could be used to produce weapons of mass destruction as well as their delivery systems.

In our view, effective coordination between the United Nations and regional arrangements is an important element for a renewed model of international security and stability. In supporting the United Nations efforts to strengthen the role of regional arrangements in the area of security, Kazakhstan is making tangible contributions to efforts to strengthen regional stability and security in Asia.

The implementation of President Nazarbaev's initiative to convene a conference on interaction and confidence-building in Asia is well on track. Further support of this process by the United Nations and its cooperation in this matter will go a long way towards creating a climate of trust and good-neighbourliness in Asia.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization also has great potential in terms of contributing to regional and global stability and security. Kazakhstan has proposed to establish in Almaty a Central Asian preventive diplomacy and conflict management centre under United Nations auspices and is calling for its support. Such an institution will strengthen United Nations activities in the region, which should be in the interest of all countries concerned.

Finally, I would like once again to assure you that we will fully support all efforts by this Committee to adopt decisions which will strengthen the non-proliferation regime and promote security at regional and global levels. My delegation stands ready, as it invariably has at previous sessions, to work together with our colleagues to achieve our common goals.

Ms. Mangray (Guyana): Allow me, at the outset, to express sincere congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of this Committee, and to all the members of the Bureau. Your leadership thus far has confirmed that our confidence in your abilities is well-placed. My delegation also takes this opportunity to welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe. We look forward to benefiting from his wisdom in the course of our deliberations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bahamas, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). However, I wish to highlight a few points of particular interest to my delegation.

I wish to place on record Guyana's concern about the disastrous impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on the socio-economic fabric of our societies. Millions have lost their lives or been maimed, particularly innocent civilians and, overwhelmingly, women and children. The large majority of conflicts are fuelled by small arms and light weapons. Serious human rights violations have occurred, including the tragic phenomenon of child soldiers. In many instances, an increase in violence is occurring in countries with a limited capacity for dealing effectively with this problem. Moreover, small arms and light weapons have contributed to the creation of an environment hostile to trade and investment, much needed in our countries. The international community is now faced with the destabilizing effects and security implications of the

excessive accumulation and transfer of these arms and weapons.

Guyana has long had in place the basic legislative and administrative infrastructure for the control of arms, ammunition and explosives. These, however, are under consideration for review, in light of the changing patterns in domestic criminality and the need to form international alliances in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In this context, my country is working with its CARICOM partners, within the framework of the CARICOM Regional Task Force on Crime and Security, to tackle these and related problems. At the same time, the umbrella of collective security offered by the United Nations remains of paramount importance in safeguarding the welfare of States, particularly that of small States. If I may say so, smallness must no longer be seen as an invitation to aggression, but rather as a virtue to be prized and protected. This will only be possible if, together, we strengthen the multilateral regime on which our collective security depends.

Against this background, we welcome the convening of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the National, Regional and Global levels, held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003. The Meeting has taken stock of progress made since the Programme of Action was adopted in 2001 and identified a number of issues where further progress needs to be made. The First Committee now has the important task of building on the outcome of that Meeting, and its efforts to address that issue and to act upon the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Given the destructive impact of this trade, serious consideration of this subject should remain a priority in the work of the First Committee.

Another scourge that needs to be eradicated is the presence of anti-personnel landmines, which kill or maim thousands of people every year. My Government is fully committed to this objective. In August of this year, Guyana deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention was held last month in Bangkok to advance the implementation of the Convention. We wish to register our profound appreciation to the Kingdom of Thailand for the excellent arrangements made and the warm hospitality accorded, which contributed to a worthy outcome.

We call upon all States to renew their efforts to support and advance the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims and to support mine-awareness programmes and the removal of anti-personnel mines in the various regions of the world. To this end, we look forward to the outcome of the First Review Conference in 2004.

In closing, let me state that my delegation stands ready to work with you and with all delegations to advance the disarmament agenda. We would look positively on any constructive proposals made towards that end.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, Mr. Chairman, I would like to congratulate you on your election to this post. It is very gratifying for us to see in the chair such a highly-skilled professional who represents a friendly neighbouring country, and we wish you success and will try to assist you to that end. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Abe, who is participating in the current session for the first time as United Nations Under-Secretary-General. We are ready for the closest kind of cooperation with him. We are also glad to see here in this room the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Sergei Ordzhonikidze and we wish him success in his work with all of us.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to enhancing the cohesion of the international community, with the United Nations in a central role, in addressing current issues regarding the maintenance of global security and stability. In his statement from the rostrum of the General Assembly of the United Nations, at the 11th meeting, on 25 September, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, stressed that, over recent years, the international community and the United Nations have had to deal with fundamentally new tasks and to grapple with global challenges that differ from previous ones, the principal one of these being terrorism. Thus, the President of Russia stated, "the United Nations must become — and is indeed becoming — the basis for a global anti-terrorist coalition". He added that "Russia is convinced that the United Nations must maintain its central role in international affairs".

An effective solution to these problems could be facilitated by the implementation of the Russian initiative to work out a global strategy to counter new challenges and threats, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/145. Incidentally, work is going on in this area to implement the Secretary-General's initiative presented in his statement at the opening of this session. We are counting on the fact that, during the current session, a new resolution will be adopted, which will further specify steps in this direction.

Rapid changes in the world today make it imperative that new approaches be adopted on the disarmament agenda. Efforts in this area are now being undertaken in a political climate that is totally different than before and in which the age of confrontation has become a thing of the past. As a result, broad opportunities are emerging for partnership-based approaches in the area of arms control and disarmament. A striking example of this is the Russian-United States Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, which entered into force on 1 June 2003. Having taken a legal obligation to reduce strategic offensive potentials by two thirds, the two countries have reaffirmed the continuity of the process of nuclear disarmament and have made a real contribution to the fulfilment of their commitments under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

At the same time, the issue of non-proliferation has acquired a new and dangerous dimension because weapons and other materials of mass destruction are now accessible to terrorists. Without a doubt, the most resolute efforts are required, including innovative approaches, in order to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Moreover, in so doing, it is extremely important that, as a matter of principle, we rely on time-tested rules of international law and accepted non-proliferation mechanisms and continue our work in order to enhance and improve them, taking into account the interests of the entire international community. Here, success can be achieved only if two principal conditions are met: cohesion on the part of the international community and elimination of the factors that have the potential to give rise to conflict in various regions of the world.

In general, in defining a methodology for resolving current problems in the field of international security, we see no alternative to multilateralism. There can be no doubt that multilateralism is effective, but only if it is cooperative multilateralism that takes into account legitimate interests and the need of all States for undiminished security.

Among specific areas of work aimed at maintaining international security, we attach priority to strengthening the Treaty for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We should make the most of the preparatory process for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and seek to ensure that it takes place in a constructive atmosphere and produces positive results. Another logical step in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament area could be to begin negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

We welcome the accession of Afghanistan, Cuba and Timor-Leste to the NPT. Once again, we call on the countries that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States. The Treaty recently encountered new, serious challenges. We consider the statement by the People's Democratic Republic of Korea on withdrawal from the NPT to be a mistake. Russia has consistently favoured a nuclear-free status for the Korean Peninsula, taking into due account the interests and concerns of all parties. The current situation should be addressed exclusively through political and diplomatic means, and the first step has been taken with the launching of the Beijing process. What is most important now is to ensure that the process moves forward with a view to the earliest possible settlement of the problem.

With regard to strengthening the NPT, it is urgent that we improve the effectiveness and credibility of its verification machinery — the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system. We call on all States that have not yet acceded to the Additional Protocol to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement — particularly those that have major nuclear energy programmes and are implementing them — to do so as soon as possible. We support the IAEA's efforts to clarify questions concerning Iran's nuclear programme. We hope that reciprocal efforts will make it possible to resolve the existing concerns in the very near future.

In August, we marked the fortieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, commonly known as the Moscow Treaty. The agreement, whose membership now exceeds 130

States, was one of the first steps undertaken by the international community to contain the nuclear arms race. It created conditions that led to further agreements, which culminated in the 1996 conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which prohibited underground nuclear explosions as well.

We continue to be seriously concerned about the future of the CTBT; we are convinced that there must be no lessening of efforts to ensure its entry into force. Therefore, we welcome the international community's plan of action and political declaration supporting the CTBT, as adopted by the Third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Treaty. As a matter of principle, it is important that, before the Treaty enters into force, there be compliance with the moratorium on nuclear-weapon tests and on any other nuclear detonations. We express the hope that the 12 States, on which the CTBT's entry into force now depends, will carry out their special responsibility for the Treaty's future. We note the responsible attitude of Afghanistan, Algeria and Kyrgyzstan, which recently ratified the Treaty.

Russia has consistently supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Security assurances by the Russian Federation now extend to the more than 100 States that have acceded to the relevant agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones. If a compromise is achieved on the issue of security assurances in connection with the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty), and if the well-known initiative of the Central Asian States is implemented, the list of countries covered by such assurances will become all the more impressive.

We note with satisfaction that the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles (INPRO) has been under way since 2001 — under the IAEA's auspices — in the context of the initiative launched by President Putin at the Millennium Summit on providing energy to support the sustainable development of humanity, finding a far-reaching solution to issues related to nuclear non-proliferation and improving the Earth's environmental health, which presupposes a technological solution to nuclear safety and security problems. Fifteen countries and institutions are participating in the project, and Russia will continue to fully support INPRO's implementation, including by providing necessary scientific and technological expertise.

We remain convinced that there can be no delay in resolving the issue of preventing the emplacement of weapons in outer space. In his statement at the current session of the General Assembly, the President of the Russian Federation emphasized that we favour the elaboration of a comprehensive agreement on that issue and invited countries with outer space potential to join our initiative.

At the Conference on Disarmament, Russia and China, together with a group of sponsoring States, introduced a working paper entitled, "Possible elements for a future international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects" (CD/1679). That document is receiving increasing attention throughout the world. A preferable venue for future work on such an agreement would be the appropriate ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament. Russia has taken the necessary steps to begin such work and to break the current deadlock of the Conference as a whole.

Russia's proposal to establish a moratorium on the deployment of weapons in outer space, pending relevant agreement, also remains valid. Efforts to ensure predictability of the situation in outer space could be facilitated if the outer space Powers provide the international community with information concerning forthcoming launches of outer space objects and their purposes, which Russia has begun doing this year.

The issue of international information security is also among our priorities at the current General Assembly session. We are submitting an updated draft resolution, entitled, "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (A/C.1/58/L.3), which is based on the text of last year's resolution. We hope that the group of governmental experts to be established in 2004 under the draft resolution to prepare a report of the Secretary-General will carefully and objectively consider existing and potential threats in the information security sphere as well as possible cooperative measures to address them.

We consider the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction to be an

effective instrument for preventing the proliferation of those deadly weapons and for reducing the risk of toxic chemicals being used as a means of terror. The best way to prevent chemical weapons leakage is to eliminate them completely. Russia has begun to eliminate its stocks at its Gorny facility, which came into operation this year. Universal adherence to the Convention remains an urgent task, and we welcome Afghanistan's ratification of the Convention.

We intend to participate actively in the efforts of the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, planned for the period until 2006. We think that such forums are useful for reaching agreement on collective steps aimed at strengthening the Convention. We also continue to believe that the development of legally binding measures for its verification remains a long-term task for strengthening the Convention.

We attach great importance to political and diplomatic means of resolving the problem of missile proliferation. We reaffirm Russia's initiatives concerning a global monitoring system to verify non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies, aimed at creating a global missile non-proliferation regime. Having supported the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, we believe that the Code is only the first step towards the elaboration of a legally binding multilateral agreement on such a regime. We consider the work done by the Group of Governmental Experts on missiles in the framework of the United Nations to be positive. We believe that it is high time for the Group to proceed with in-depth consideration of the problems on its agenda.

We commend the useful work done in Geneva by the Group of Governmental Experts in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Progress is evident in the elaboration of the draft of a new instrument designed to reduce the humanitarian consequences of explosive remnants of war.

Discussions have begun concerning the placing of additional restrictions on mines other than antipersonnel landmines. We will continue to take an active part in that process.

We take note of the leading role played by the United Nations in the implementation of a comprehensive approach to the question of small arms and light weapons. Efforts must be redoubled to implement the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, with a major emphasis on combating illicit trafficking in such weapons. Meaningful progress must be made in the implementation of the Programme of Action, which will be followed up at the 2006 review conference.

We have taken note of the considerations voiced by a number of States regarding the improvement of the working methods of the First Committee. We are ready to participate creatively in unofficial discussions on this issue. We deem it worthwhile to consider it in the context of United Nations reform in general, taking into account, first of all, the specific nature of the activities of the United Nations.

The Russian delegation is ready to cooperate constructively and openly with you, Mr. Chairman, and with all delegations in carrying out the challenging tasks facing the First Committee.

Mr. Tesch (Australia): May I join other delegations in expressing our good wishes and congratulations to you on your appointment as Chairman of this very important Committee.

As we begin our work, I think that we should recall that resolutions are not an end in themselves. The First Committee's authority and credibility will inevitably erode if resolutions do not translate into practical outcomes.

We all have a responsibility to make the work of this Committee relevant to current security challenges. It follows that we should concentrate our efforts on the most pressing and widely held concerns. This requires a revitalization and streamlining of its agenda and processes. We welcome the proposal to convene a session on First Committee reform.

The spread of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems represents the most serious threat to international security. This, of course, is not a new threat, and the First Committee has devoted much effort to addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. But the demand among proliferators for weapons of mass destruction-related technologies is growing. Increasingly, we face the prospect of such weapons being acquired by States and non-State actors with little regard for the norms of responsible international behaviour.

The development of indigenous weapons of mass destruction-related capabilities in countries of concern is increasing, as is the threat that those countries could make such weapons available to others, including terrorists. The prospect of weapons of mass destruction falling into terrorist hands is unthinkable, and yet it is a challenge we must address collectively and resolutely.

It cannot be denied that we are meeting at a time of strong challenges to the existing non-proliferation and disarmament regime based on treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Since we met last, North Korea has been found by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be in non-compliance with its NPT safeguards obligations and has announced its withdrawal from the NPT. Serious questions have also emerged about the nature of Iran's nuclear programme. There are persistent concerns regarding the compliance of some parties to the other major non-proliferation treaties.

For that reason, we must redouble our efforts to strengthen international disarmament and non-proliferation norms and arrangements. We must be resolute in dealing with cases of non-compliance. We must send an unambiguous message that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction cannot be tolerated.

Members of the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament treaties share a responsibility to respect and strengthen verification mechanisms in those treaties. In the nuclear field, Australia considers that application of the International Atomic Energy Agency's strengthened safeguards system — the Additional Protocol — should quickly become an essential prerequisite for nuclear supply. It is also our view that wide application of the strengthened safeguards system would encourage further progress on nuclear disarmament.

The threat posed by the proliferation of biological weapons is real and increasing. Australia is committed to renewed efforts to strengthening implementation of the BWC, and we urge all States to participate actively in all BWC meetings leading up to the next review conference, to be held in 2006.

While the major norm-setting work in the area of weapons of mass destruction has been established in the key treaties, important follow-up work has yet to be done. It defies credibility that the widely held aspiration for a fissile material cut-off treaty continues to be frustrated by the Conference on Disarmament's failure to agree on a work programme.

Australia is keen to see the Hague Code of Conduct firmly established as a universal and viable confidence-building measure to help prevent ballistic missile proliferation. Ballistic missiles are the weapon of choice for the delivery of weapons of mass destruction; their proliferation directly affects the security interests of all States. Australia is pleased that 109 States have now subscribed to the Code, although we remain disappointed that so few States in the South-east Asian region have done so to date.

Given the increasing threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it is incumbent on us to strengthen these arrangements through a range of complementary measures. Foremost is controlling the transfer or illicit trafficking of materials and technology that are related to weapons of mass destruction. All States must be vigilant in ensuring that they do not supply or assist in delivering items that could advance proliferators' weapons of mass destruction or missile programmes.

Making better use of existing tools will help. But the reality is that the existing weapons of mass destruction regime is not, by itself, enough to stop determined proliferators. For that reason, Australia, while continuing to support and engage actively in existing weapons of mass destruction instruments, has joined with others in the Proliferation Security Initiative.

That Initiative is developing practical ways to further impede illicit trafficking in weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials to and from States and non-State actors of proliferation concern. The interdiction principles agreed between PSI members complement existing non-proliferation regimes and are entirely consistent with international laws. Australia strongly encourages the many States committed to preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction to lend their support to this important initiative.

We are committed to practical disarmament efforts, which have delivered tangible, grass-roots benefits to the international community.

In the area of small arms and light weapons, Australia has been active in promoting implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. A continuing priority for us will be to work with regional partners to assist Pacific Island countries to strengthen small arms controls and enforcement capacity, which is an important element of international efforts to combat the illicit trade. Australia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

We are also pleased with the considerable progress achieved to date in negotiations on a protocol on explosive remnants of war. Australia's support for a legally binding instrument stems from our very clear recognition of the serious humanitarian impact on civilian populations that unexploded ordnance has. Australia urges all States to continue efforts to reach consensus on a protocol on explosive remnants of war at the final negotiating session in November.

Australia congratulates Thailand on its successful hosting of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. That Convention continues to grow in strength. Among our neighbours, we commend Timor-Leste for having recently acceded to the Convention. But it is lamentable that many States remain outside, including some leading members of the Security Council, most of the Middle East and much of Asia. Australia calls on those States which have yet to accede to do so as soon as possible and to make a clear commitment not to use antipersonnel mines in the interim.

In this forum, we must work to foster international support for practical measures that seek to address existing and emerging threats to international security. We must steer the work of this forum away from the unproductive debate that has stalled progress. The Australian delegation looks forward to working constructively with you, Sir, and with all delegations to help ensure a successful session.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Let me, at the outset, congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and assure you that we place our confidence in your capacity to successfully guide our deliberations. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

One of the cardinal objectives of the United Nations is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In furtherance of that objective, the United Nations, since its inception, has embarked on disarmament measures. It was remarkable that even during the period of super-Power rivalry, discussions and agreements on disarmament continued. Thus, the United Nations, unlike the League of Nations, proved to be an effective Organization, not necessarily for achieving disarmament, but for maintaining dialogue on the levels and the regulation of armaments. That dialogue has, in recent years, resulted in positive gains, which include the adoption and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. Nuclear-weapon-free zones have also been established in various parts of the world, and nuclear safeguards have been strengthened.

Despite these positive developments, the rest of the picture is much gloomier. International peace and security continue to face profound challenges in the form of nuclear weapons and conventional arms. While most of the non-nuclear-weapon States continue to meet their obligations under multilateral treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), nuclear-weapon States and some other key States are unwilling to implement their obligations, and some have even refused to sign and ratify those instruments. Instead, they continue to perfect both conventional arms and nuclear weapons. We are told that this is being done in order to meet new threats, and in the name of national security.

The need for serious nuclear disarmament is being undermined by those claims. To make such claims is a clear invitation to other States to acquire nuclear weapons under the same pretext, as, by nature, every State has essential national security interests to protect and new threats to meet. No State or group of States should be allowed to have a monopoly on nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. The security to which all of us are entitled can be achieved only by means of complete disarmament. With the end of the cold war, there can be no justification for some States to claim the exclusive right to possess these weapons indefinitely. Nuclear-weapon States repeatedly remind other States not to acquire nuclear weapons. If their demands are to be

taken seriously, then they should demonstrate concretely their willingness to eliminate their nuclear weapons within the shortest possible time frame.

Namibia, being a State party to the NPT and the CTBT, continues to fulfil its international obligations under those instruments. States that actually possess nuclear weapons refuse to disarm. The mere mention of nuclear disarmament can upset those who possess such weapons, but it is easy for them to call upon other States to remain non-nuclear and to subject them to threats of unilateral action for allegedly failing to comply with their obligations under the non-proliferation regime. If the provisions of the NPT are to be respected, all States parties must be held equally accountable when they fail to comply with their respective obligations under the Treaty.

It seems to us that those who possess nuclear weapons are preoccupied with preventing other countries from acquiring such weapons, but not with negotiations aimed at eliminating them under strict and effective international control. In that process, nuclear weapons have become a means of exerting pressure on and blackmailing countries that do not have them. But what nuclear-weapon States forget is that such behaviour fosters proliferation. So long as such weapons exist, we have to face the problem of nuclear terrorism with all its ramifications. We believe that the only safe and effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is the complete elimination of those weapons.

Namibia is committed to the objectives of arms control and the principles of openness and transparency with regard to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms. We continue to support General Assembly resolutions on transparency in armaments and military expenditures, which require Member States to supply information on their conventional arms inventories and expenditures. We view that information as essential, as it can help minimize the risk of the arms race and armed conflicts between and among nations. We support the call for the expansion of the scope of the Register of Conventional Arms to include weapons of mass destruction. In order for the Register to be effective, it should be comprehensive and non-discriminatory, and it must address the security concerns of all States.

As we talk about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, we should not forget about the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In Africa, for example, small arms and light weapons are weapons of mass destruction. Those weapons are in the hands of rebel groups, including child soldiers. They stifle development and cause havoc, death and destruction in the African continent. It is regrettable that none of the countries that are involved in conflict produce those weapons. They come from sources outside Africa which are determined to achieve their selfish political and economic agendas at the expense of the people of Africa. In order to address this menace effectively, there is a need for political will and international cooperation among all those involved, in particular the producers, to ensure that their weapons do not end up in the wrong hands. Furthermore, we call for the speedy and full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. All States Members of the United Nations have a responsibility to that end.

Ms. Mohamed (Kenya): I wish to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee for the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I wish to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Uganda, Ambassador Semakula Kiwanuka, for successfully steering the First Committee during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

I also congratulate our new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe of Japan, on his appointment to this high post.

Our recent experience in Kenya, where we were twice rocked by terrorist attacks, in 1998 and again in 2002, has taught us only too well that in today's world no nation is an island. We are all interdependent. What happens in one corner of the globe has an almost immediate effect on, and touches upon, other nations elsewhere. Kenya is therefore more convinced than ever before that no one nation can by itself address the many challenges faced by a world that is a global village. In our efforts to deal with common threats brought about by the proliferation of both conventional and non-conventional weapons, we must act collectively to address the issues of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. In all our endeavours,

multilateral, legally binding and verifiable arms control treaties must be adopted as the tools of choice.

It is of particular concern to us that the perpetrators of terrorism have brought terrorism to the doorstep of the United Nations, the symbol of our collective will and purpose. The bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq in August and the consequent loss of United Nations personnel was indeed a wake-up call: terrorism respects neither creed nor boundaries. In our case, terrorist attacks have merely strengthened our resolve to fight this scourge.

Kenya is therefore totally committed to the fight against terrorism. We urge all States to support international efforts to rid the world of this evil in all its manifestations. We also support all measures aimed at preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and associated technologies. It is for that reason that we commend the activities of the subscribing States to the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation to achieve its universalization, and we reiterate our support for the Code and other initiatives aimed at achieving universal nuclear non-proliferation.

Terrorism in our region is especially exacerbated by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons. Measures to curb the proliferation of these weapons would therefore greatly advance the war against terrorism. The 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects constituted a watershed of multilateralism. The Programme of Action adopted by the Conference was an unprecedented achievement in global norm-setting and concrete road-mapping. The First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in July this year, was testimony to the rising groundswell of a vibrant political momentum for creating, sustaining and supporting national mechanisms for the Programme's implementation. My Government congratulates Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan on urging the Biennial Meeting to focus its attention on the critical role of international assistance for implementation.

We believe that the Biennial Meeting was highly effective in advancing the process of implementation of the Programme of Action. It strengthened the already strong case for global resource mobilization to meet a global threat. It also echoed the candid voice of the countries most affected by the wrongful use of illicitly circulating weapons. After all, the wearer knows best where the shoe pinches most.

As a country that has suffered greatly from an influx of small arms and light weapons, Kenya is a key player in our subregional efforts to combat the trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In March 2000, Kenya hosted a historic Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa conference on the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The conference was unique, because it brought together 10 countries of our subregion, some of which at that time were still in conflict. They came together because of their common desire to rid their countries of the enormous quantities of small arms which continued to fuel the raging conflicts. The realization that there was no light at the end of the tunnel unless they came to grips with the situation provided the necessary impetus for a successful conference and outcome.

The conference adopted a Declaration in which it encouraged an agenda for action. The Nairobi Secretariat on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the region was later established to follow up on an agreed plan of action for implementation of the agenda.

The Nairobi plan of action calls for international support for collective projects. We would particularly welcome support for those projects aimed at lawful seizure, voluntary surrender and public destruction of wrongfully acquired small arms and light weapons. The international community's priority must be to support subregional initiatives, since illicit arms trafficking intrinsically thrives upon loopholes resulting from divergent national practices in regulating private arms possession and trading.

We have some concrete ideas for specific projects that would simultaneously address three interrelated problems in our subregion: reducing further the number of weapons in illicit circulation; discouraging their likely use for wrongful purposes; and improving monitoring of the avenues for unaccounted transfers. In designing and carrying out these projects, we look forward to receiving advice and support, particularly from the Conventional Arms Branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which is uniquely equipped to assist us in designing projects and mobilizing resources from the international donor community.

The French and Swiss Governments' initiative on tracing and marking deserves special mention. We hope

that during the current session we shall indeed see the launching of negotiations on international instruments to this end.

My delegation takes this opportunity to commend Thailand for its successful hosting in Bangkok of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention. It is encouraging that 141 States have ratified the Convention. We call upon the States who have not yet ratified it to do so. We also commend those that have recently acceded.

The Ottawa Convention is approaching a crossroads in its implementation. The First Review Conference will be held from 29 November to 3 December next year in Nairobi, to consider future operations under the Convention. I take this opportunity to invite all members of the Committee to actively participate in that Conference, as well as in the preparatory meetings, which will be held in Geneva in February and June 2004.

Kenya is encouraged by the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by 168 States, including 41 of the 44 required for its entry into force, and welcomes its ratification by 104 States, including 32 of the 44 needed for its entry into force, 3 being nuclear-weapon States. We urge all States to refrain from any activities that could undermine this treaty and lead to a resumption of the arms race, and to respect their commitment with regard to nuclear-weapons test explosions and any other nuclear explosions, pending the Treaty's entry into force. Kenya calls on all those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT without condition; in particular, we call for those ratifications required for the Treaty to enter into force.

The commitments already made by nuclear-weapon States on nuclear disarmament need to be addressed urgently. Nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility and maybe, in an ironic twist of events, a unique opportunity to discharge it in light of our common concern over the acquisition and use of those weapons by terrorists or non-State actors. We hope that they will rise to the occasion, and we stand ready to cooperate in any way feasible. As always, we reaffirm our commitment to and expectations and aspirations for the noble goals of international disarmament instruments and the objective of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We must, however, express our disappointment with the inadequate progress made in the application of the 13 steps on nuclear disarmament, which were included in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and express our hope that, in fact, a way forward to strengthen and revitalize them will be found.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the linchpin of the global non-proliferation regime and the basis upon which the argument for nuclear disarmament is founded. Whereas the Treaty does not prohibit the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, international safeguard mechanisms for compliance with the spirit and the letter of the Treaty must be adhered to. In this respect, the International Atomic Energy Agency's international safeguards system must be promoted and strengthened as the main component of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We urge all States that have not yet done so to accede to the NPT.

Kenya attaches great importance to the successful implementation of both the Chemical Weapons and Biological and Toxin Weapons conventions. We urge States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to make use of the facilities offered by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in order for them to be able to meet their obligations under the Treaty. With regard to the implementation of the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons, Kenya urges States parties to utilize the forthcoming meeting of States parties to agree on mutually acceptable legislation that each country can enact to cover the national implementation of the Convention's obligations and other related issues.

The insufficiency of political will has exposed the Conference on Disarmament to criticism for the lack of progress. So, year after year, we all come to the First Committee expressing regret on the existing stalemate and expressing the hope that the following year will be different.

Hope, as Committee members know, is a pleasant acquaintance but an unsafe friend, and so no substantive change has occurred. The Conference on Disarmament is still pregnant with the ideas expressed in its still-to-be adopted work programme, but

continues to suffer from a seven-year period of labour pains.

Although many laudable efforts have been made, including by five ambassadors, which we support, agreement still evades us. I would therefore like to make a special appeal to all members of the Conference on Disarmament to make the additional effort to walk the extra mile needed so as not to undermine the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament. As United States President Abraham Lincoln said many years ago, "I am a slow walker, but I never walk back."

We all need strong and well-functioning multilateral institutions and instruments. Indeed, they have acquired a new urgency and importance. Let us not allow our slow walk to be mistaken for walking back. Certainly let us not allow the progress that has been made to become undone.

My delegation supports the convening of the fourth special General Assembly session devoted to disarmament. In the current fluid and dangerous situation, it is crucial that we garner public support for the process of disarmament and support the establishment of an open-ended working group to prepare for the meeting. For that purpose, we request the Secretary-General to provide the necessary assistance and support.

In conclusion, the United Nations role in today's world is increasingly called into question, as are the roles of its committees. The revitalization of the United Nations, including the First Committee, will of necessity have to take into consideration the prevailing priorities of its members, which, in our opinion, should be collective security geared towards economic and social development for all Members of the United Nations family.

It is inevitable, therefore, that the First Committee, being one of the key Committees of the United Nations, will increasingly come under scrutiny. Kenya is of the view that the review of the First Committee should be undertaken in the spirit underpinning the review of the General Assembly as a whole. It is our belief that such a review should not be addressed to the First Committee in isolation. It is equally important to keep in mind that any review should be tackled in a comprehensive manner to include other institutions that deal with disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Kenya for her kinds words addressed to the chair.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): Jamaica associates itself with the statement delivered earlier this morning by the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). My delegation wishes to make some supplementary remarks from Jamaica's own standpoint.

The goal of general and complete disarmament, including the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, remains a longstanding priority of the United Nations. Yet, our efforts to achieve this objective in the long term have been less than encouraging, particularly so over the past year. Indeed, there has been evidence of a gradual weakening of the existing legal regime governing international disarmament, exacerbated by the resort to actions that fall outside the ambit of the principles of collective security. This has led to situations where the will of the many has been overcome by the might of the few, thus undermining the collective system for international security, which provides the foundation for our disarmament efforts.

Jamaica therefore shares the concern expressed by the Secretary-General that there needs to be a strengthening of global disarmament norms. In our view, such a strengthening has to be based on adherence to multilateral principles carried out in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, non-discrimination, increased transparency, compliance and trust.

Of concern also are new precepts, some of which do not yet have a basis within the international legal regime, which add to instances of parallel disarmament efforts and do little to ensure lasting peace and security. Rather, such actions contribute to a climate of insecurity, erode trust and confidence and lead to a counterproductive and unsatisfactory situation of uncertainty and instability within the international community.

It is within such a situation that the global community also finds itself facing new and worrying threats to international peace and security, including the possibility of access by non-State actors to weapons of mass destruction. Jamaica fully agrees with the need for international action in dealing with these dangers but urges that the search for solutions should be based within a collective, non-discriminatory and transparent framework.

The steadily increasing expenditure in armaments, which now totals approximately $800 billion, is a great cause for concern. While the majority of the expenditure is dominated by a few large spenders, many other countries have increased spending in armaments as a response to perceived internal or external security threats. Jamaica is of the view that increased militarization enhances the likelihood of a military response as a first option to the resolution of conflict and does little to improve security, especially in the context of regional rivalries.

Jamaica remains committed to the cause of general and complete disarmament. This commitment has been made evident by Jamaica's ratification of a number of disarmament conventions, its compliance with its obligations under these conventions, and the active pursuit of appropriate measures to ensure compliance. We remain fully supportive of the aims and objectives of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in seeking to eliminate the spread and use of nuclear weapons, particularly in the strengthening of the regime in relation to vertical and horizontal proliferation. Jamaica attaches importance to the adherence to the article VI obligations which would give greater credibility to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and assurance to concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States.

In relation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Jamaica signed the Protocol Additional to the Agreement between Jamaica and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards, on 19 March 2003.

Jamaica also supports the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and participated in the first NPT Review Conference. We have also been working actively with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Secretariat to promote the universality of the CWC within the Caribbean region. At this juncture, I wish to express appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW for the technical assistance which has been made available to Jamaica so as to allow for our effective implementation and administration of CWC.

As a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Jamaica supports and urges its early entry into force. As part of this process, Jamaica was pleased to host in December 2002 a workshop on international cooperation and national implementation of the CTBT, which attracted participants from the Caribbean and Latin American subregion.

Jamaica continues to regret the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that it may now be appropriate for there to be a review of the issue of negotiating machinery and its relationship to the First Committee. Such a review could be carried out within the context of the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, the holding of which is clearly necessary and which Jamaica fully supports.

The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPOA) remains integral to the establishment of global norms to deal with illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

The First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which took place here in New York in July, provided a useful and timely opportunity to take stock of the progress of implementation. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan for her successful chairmanship of that meeting. We look forward to the second biennial meeting to be held in 2005, as well as to the review conference in 2006.

Jamaica was honoured to have been a member of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, established by the Secretary-General. We fully support the need for an international convention on the marking and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons and urge this Committee to agree to the recommendation made by the Group for the launching of negotiations on such an instrument.

As a State Party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Jamaica welcomes the successful conclusion of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, held recently in Thailand, and looks forward to the first review conference to be held in 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. We urge the full implementation of this Convention and wish to commend those countries that have taken active steps to destroy their stockpiles of antipersonnel mines.

In conclusion, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to

guide the work of this Committee. You can be assured of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your duties, particularly in seeking to examine ways and means to streamline the work of this Committee, which we believe should be within the context of the overall revitalization of the General Assembly. I also welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, and applaud him and the other members of his Department for the commendable work they are doing for disarmament.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to join others in formally extending our warmest congratulations to you on your election to direct the affairs of this Committee. Following the saying which the Chairman quoted on Monday, I would like to assure him that we will not attempt to offer him any advice. However we assure him that our delegation is willing and ready to assist him and members of the Bureau in fulfilling their responsibilities. I would also like to welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, who, in his statement on Monday, set the scene for this general debate on all disarmament issues.

Mr. Abe and the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization, have provided a lucid account of the current state of affairs in the area of disarmament and arms control. In my delegation's view, the situation is not encouraging. Previous speakers in this debate have already identified the major elements, mainly procedural, that continue to cast a thick cloud over the entire multilateral disarmament process.

In the interest of time, my delegation will not repeat all of these elements. These elements comprise, in our view, a series of failures and disappointments in and by the Committee on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, and in efforts concerning the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Some say these failures or disappointments are attributable to the lack of political will. Others say they are due to a lack of trust. Whatever the causes of the current stalemate, my delegation believes that it is pertinent to ask, where do we go from here? How do we get out of this impasse? What is the way forward?

In the view of my delegation, we must first understand that in the current international environment, disarmament is no longer a choice but an absolute necessity, not just for a few States, but for all States. It appears that we have still not yet grasped the true nature and gravity of the nuclear threat. We have yet to understand that disarmament is not a game of political chess, but a vital shield against self-destruction or mutual annihilation.

Secondly, we must erase the misperception that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is solely directed at non-nuclear-weapon and potential nuclear-weapon States. It appears that public opinion or public attention is being focused on the spread of nuclear weapons and attempts by certain States to acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

On the other hand, the mutual obligations and responsibilities of both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty have been virtually submerged in the issues of verification and compliance.

In searching for the way forward, we need to focus on both horizontal and vertical proliferation. My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General that nuclear-weapon States have, for their part, done little to diminish the symbolic importance of these weapons and too little to fulfil their commitment to undertake, in good faith, efforts at moving forward towards nuclear arms reductions and ultimate disarmament.

While drawing public attention to the issues of verification and compliance, we need to re-emphasize the obligation of nuclear-weapon States under article VI of the Treaty to eliminate their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.

This brings me to the issue of compliance and penalties for non-compliance. How should non-compliance with commitments under disarmament regimes be dealt with? What should be the response of the international community to non-compliance or even renunciation or withdrawal of legal obligations under those regimes? Armed force? The threat of use of force? Sanctions or diplomacy? Is it necessary at this stage to speak of strengthening enforcement provisions in regimes dealing with weapons of mass destruction? Would such a move resolve the equally threatening incidence and serious problems of vertical proliferation?

In our view, those are questions that we should be addressing at this critical juncture for international peace and security. As the Secretary-General states in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, while there was in one particular instance consensus on the need to disarm, there was no agreement on the means to achieve that aim.

My delegation believes that while it is absolutely necessary for the international community, including the Security Council, to take non-compliance seriously as a threat to international peace and security, it is also necessary to find the most appropriate means of dealing with non-participation in the major multilateral disarmament regimes by States that possess or have the capability of developing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In other words, we should vigorously promote the universality of those regimes.

We cannot afford to use a big stick against the selected few that are already on board but fail to meet their obligations or that threaten those who want to get off, while at the same time do absolutely nothing about others who should be on board but who refuse to come on board. In order to advance the processes of peace, disarmament and international security, we must abandon that selective and discriminatory approach to compliance and verification.

Failure to achieve universality with respect to key multilateral disarmament regimes such as the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) undermines those regimes. It also poses a serious threat to international peace and security. Incidentally, I should say that Sierra Leone is a party to both the NPT and the CTBT.

We share the legitimate universal concern about the growing fear that non-State actors may acquire weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons. Efforts are underway to deal with that new challenge to humankind. However, we believe that the most effective way of alleviating that fear and ensuring that terrorists do not have access to weapons of mass destruction is to eliminate those weapons, and to work relentlessly to do so.

The devastation that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has caused in several parts of the world, including in my own country, Sierra Leone, is well known. While our attention is being drawn to the threat of the possible access to weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors, namely, terrorists, we fail to understand why the issue of access by non-State actors to illicit arms and light weapons — the so-called issue of the civilian possession of arms — remains a controversial issue. In the hands of non-State actors, such as rebels, bandits and mercenaries engaged in terrorist activities in areas such as West Africa, those weapons have killed thousands of people and continue to pose a serious threat to peace and security in our regions.

We recall that the issue of such weapons in the hands of non-State actors almost wrecked the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In our view, the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference contains absolutely nothing on that issue. We remain concerned that small arms and light weapons should be transferred only to States or their authorized agents, and not to non-State actors, most of whom are engaged in terrorist activities that continue to claim the lives of thousands of our people and to destabilize our countries.

We note that in her summary Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan, the chairperson of the first Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which was recently held in New York, highlighted the linkage between terrorism and illicit small arms and light weapons. We agree that to prevent terrorists and other criminal organizations from acquiring small arms and light weapons, States should be encouraged to develop relevant norms and standards to regulate the illegal circulation of those weapons. We therefore endorse the findings and conclusions contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify, mark and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

Yet another way forward to break the current stalemate in our multilateral disarmament process is for us to consider disarmament, not for its own sake, but as a vital means of enhancing human security for all in all its aspects. Specifically, we must place the question of disarmament and development at the top of our agenda. Is it not unconscionable that while billions of dollars are being wasted on the development of weapons of mass destruction and measures to verify their existence, we still have not accepted the moral

imperative to find adequate financial resources to fight the war against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis, which are already causing massive destruction in terms of human lives in the world? Is there not a link between the cost of development of weapons of mass destruction and the prospects for achieving the Development Goals of the Millennium Declaration?

We must revisit the whole question of the relationship between disarmament and development. My delegation, therefore, welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a group of governmental experts to undertake an appraisal of the relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context.

On the issue of revitalizing the work of the First Committee, my delegation is ready to participate in the consultations that the Chairman indicated he will initiate during the course of this session.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's pleasure at seeing you, Mr. Chairman, presiding over the First Committee, as well as to congratulate you on your assumption the Committee's chairmanship. There is no doubt that your chairmanship represents the culmination of your and your country's ongoing commitment to international peace and security.

I followed closely the statement made by Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. I noted with interest his call to explore ways of strengthening international peace and security. In that regard, I wish to congratulate him on his appointment as well as for the scope of his statement.

It has become perfectly clear from the many debates held both within and outside the United Nations that international peace and security constitute the alpha and the omega, and in fact the ultimate goal, of all of the international community's efforts. No human action can be successful in a hostile environment, in an atmosphere of insecurity or, quite simply, in a conflict situation. The balance of terror during the period of the cold war revealed the extreme vulnerability of human societies, and in particular the danger posed to them by the arms race.

Unfortunately, even the fall of the Berlin Wall was not able to dissipate that threat. Instead, it seems to have exacerbated the threat by way of the enormous investments that have been made in producing sophisticated weapons, the perfection of weapons of mass destruction, the production and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The escalation of terrorism is but an unfortunate example of this.

That situation is particularly worrisome given that other difficulties have arisen in recent years on the road to peace. In that connection, we have seen the Disarmament Commission — the sole United Nations negotiating body in the area of disarmament — flounder as a result of the renunciation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the non-implementation of the START Treaty. For the last five years, the Commission has been unable to adopt an agenda conducive to beginning fundamental debate.

For its part, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is still far from attaining the necessary number of signatures to bring it into force.

With regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), only the Review Conference planned for 2005 will be able to provide us with its true state of health, given that the decisions taken at the 2000 Conference have not truly been put in place.

We have not run the course of our pessimism, because the same disappointment is apparent in the realm of conventional weapons.

The conclusion of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines raised immense hopes for a large portion of the populations of developing countries, particularly those in conflicts or emerging from armed conflicts. However, we must note that, despite the efforts made, thousands of persons continue to be victims of these mines around the world. It is because of this situation that Burkina Faso will be hosting, in January of 2004, a subregional workshop within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on universalizing the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. That workshop will make it possible for member States of ECOWAS to work towards the implementation of the Convention and towards the goal of the complete elimination of mines in Western Africa. It will also make it possible for member States to come to an agreement on preparations for the First Review

Conference of the Ottawa Convention, planned for 2004 in Nairobi.

With regard to light and small-calibre weapons, the session held right here in 2001 clearly revealed the limits of the actions provided for. At the time, we deplored the fact that the countries that had the means refused to heed the distress call of the victimized countries, who were only requesting that weapons be sold only to State actors or their representatives and who wanted an effective implementation of marking and tracing, as well as the strict regulation of the role of intermediaries.

The menace weighing on mankind is a collective one, and thus requires a collective response. Our efforts, if they are to be successful, must focus on the establishment of a system of international relations that inspires greater confidence and cultivates the notion of interdependence. Collective well-being and social and economic development must be seen as the indispensable guarantors of peace and security.

Moved by peace and motivated by the will to cooperate with all States without exception, Burkina Faso will not fail to make its modest contribution to this common effort. It is in this sense, on the international level, that, since the very beginning, it has become a part of the world dynamic in the struggle against terrorism. My Government has also submitted to the Security Council the reports required by resolution 1373 (2001), and it has put experts in the area of peacekeeping operations at the disposal of the Organization. In addition, Burkina Faso has just become a party to seven conventions and one protocol related to the struggle against terrorism.

At the regional level, Burkina Faso is participating actively in the establishment of African mechanisms that will contribute to peace and security. Faced with the uncontrolled circulation of light weapons and the climate of insecurity, both linked to the multiplication of crises in Africa, and faced with bad governance and xenophobia, Burkina Faso has devoted itself to the quest for peace and collective security by adhering to the mechanisms negotiated within ECOWAS, including the Bamako moratorium on light weapons.

We have great hopes from the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and particularly this Committee, whose importance does not need to be underscored.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would first of all like to congratulate you on your unanimous election to chair the deliberations of the First Committee, and wishes you success in this difficult task. We also want to assure you of our complete cooperation in discharging your duties. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. I should like to take this occasion to welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and to wish him success in his work.

My delegation fully associates itself the statement delivered by the distinguished delegation of Peru, on behalf of the Rio Group, but we would like, on this occasion, to bring up some matters of special interest for Nicaragua.

My delegation, along with others which have spoken in this Committee, are concerned by the decline in the role of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, which cannot, with respect to its scope, be replaced by any other types of negotiation. However, we do acknowledge the important complimentary document of the bilateral negotiations in this area.

In the field of multilateralism, we are concerned that the Conference on Disarmament remains stalled, as in years past. We are also concerned that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will not be able to enter into force and that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will be stymied by the obstinate refusal of some States to become party to it and by the threats of others to withdraw from the Treaty. We call for greater international efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation to promote peace and security in all regions of the world and ensure a better world for present and future generations.

The problem of mines in Nicaragua is one of the results of the ten years of civil war that we suffered from 1979 to 1990. During that period, more than 135,000 land mines were indiscriminately sown on bridges, roads, electrical towers and other structures, mostly along our borders with neighbouring countries. There were also landmines laid by the guerrillas, of which there remains no record whatsoever. The mine problem was worsened by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Thousands of them were unearthed by the strong winds and rains, and scattered everywhere.

Anti-personnel mines constitute one of the worst results of the war, because they have affected vast areas of national production and infrastructure and have taken many human lives. By mid-year, 90,000 anti-personnel mines had been deactivated and some 46,000 still remained to be cleared, in an area of 135,00 square meters in northern Nicaragua. Under the coordination of the Organization of American States (OAS), three areas have been prioritized in 2003 for anti-personnel mine-clearance operations: Matagalpa and Wanito, Jalapa and Puerto Cabezas. Due to a number of problems, such as the lack of helicopters for medical evacuations, the topography, the difficulty in locating mines because of the lack of precise reference points, the movement of the mines from their original locations by rain and river currents, as well as the growth of vegetation in the mined areas, the mine-clearance operations will be concluded in Nicaragua in 2005, not in 2004 as originally planned.

Considering the experience acquired by Nicaraguans sappers, the Government of Nicaragua has decided to send 40 of them to Iraq to help in the mine-clearance operation in that country. As stated by President Bolaños, with this action we are, to a certain degree, paying our debt in acknowledgement of the humanitarian assistance received by Nicaragua throughout its history.

President Bolanos of Nicaragua submitted to the other Presidents of Central America, meeting in Guatemala on 17 July, a proposal for a programme on arms limitation and control to achieve a reasonable balance of forces and to promote stability, mutual trust and transparency in Central America. The Security Commission of the Central American Integration System endorsed implementation of that programme at the meeting held by Central American Presidents in Belize on 4 September.

This programme comprises security and confidence-building measures through the establishment of a reasonable balance of forces in Central America and to contribute to the institutionalization of civilian control over defence and security entities in the region.

Actions to be developed include establishing a mechanism for verification and control of inventories in every country and at the regional level, with the support of the Organization of American States (OAS); determining by consensus the end use of excessive weapons through destruction, stockpiling and transfer, in accordance with domestic legislation and relevant treaties; determining what are offensive and banned weapons, through consensus, pursuant to article 61, paragraph c, of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security; establishing a moratorium on the acquisition of new weapons considered to be offensive; the timely, gradual and progressive destruction or exchange of weapons considered to be prohibited within the context of a reasonable balance of forces; the implementation at the regional level of a standardized methodology of expenses and defence, with the support of the United Nations and the OAS; the destruction of weapons confiscated in the fight against arms trafficking, drug activity, terrorism and illegal possession, pursuant to national legislation and the maximum limits determined by the context of reasonable balance of forces; and, finally, establishing a uniform register for weapons explosives and equipment.

The programme also comprises ratification of and, in this case, progress in the area of 10 international treaties on arms control adopted by the United Nations and the OAS. The programme also includes modernization and professionalization of the armed forces, in order to be better able to deal with terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime in all their facets and dimensions, as well as the challenges implicit in humanitarian aid and the protection of the population against natural disasters.

With the implementation of this programme, the Central American countries will be ensuring the modernization of mechanisms for defence and public security in the region, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of lasting peace.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's support for your proposal, Sir, to revitalize the First Committee. However, like other delegations, we feel that this must be done within the context of revitalizing the General Assembly in the plenary group chaired by the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Scherba (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee, within this very important forum. I am confident that your diplomatic skills will lead our deliberations to a successful outcome. In this regard, you may be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to express my

appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe.

Last year's developments had significant implications for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Some of them were encouraging, as they charted positive trends, while some have highlighted the fact that the security and stability of the international community continues to be challenged, both globally and regionally, by the risks associated with the uncontrolled spread of conventional armaments, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the danger of such weapons falling into the hands of aggressive non-State actors.

Alarming signs currently observed in the field of nuclear non-proliferation dictate an urgent need to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as the bedrock of global non-proliferation efforts.

Since its accession to the NPT, Ukraine has strictly fulfilled relevant Treaty obligations. Given the NPT's crucial contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, we believe it is particularly important to promote its universality and to strengthen its viability through ensuring implementation of the Treaty in all its aspects by all Member States.

Ukraine welcomes the work done within the second session of the NPT Review Conference's Preparatory Committee, held this past spring in Geneva, and calls on all States to do their best to make a success of the next Preparatory Committee session, leading up to the 2005 Conference.

In this context, I would like to place special emphasis on the need for all States parties to the NPT to abide by the decisions of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences, including the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament.

We have to admit that progress in implementing the practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts for nuclear disarmament, as set forth in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, remains far from satisfactory. Prospects of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still appear gloomy, although that is the Treaty that is instrumental in advancing both non-proliferation and disarmament. As a full-fledged party to the CTBT, Ukraine urges the States still outside the Treaty to ratify or accede to it at an early date. We commend the utmost restraint being exercised by CTBT nuclear-weapon States parties and non-State parties by refraining from conducting nuclear-weapon-test explosions. We hope that they will continue to abide by their commitment to maintain the global nuclear-weapon-test moratorium.

The uncertain security environment in today's world increases the importance of strengthening the capability of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to verify declared nuclear activities and especially to detect and deter clandestine activities. This can be accomplished through the faithful and universal application of comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols. Ukraine fully endorses measures envisaged by the Additional Protocol to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. The preparatory activities for ratification of the Protocol, signed by Ukraine in 2000, have been under way.

Ukraine believes that legally binding security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT will significantly strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime by eliminating plausible incentives for pursuing nuclear capabilities. We strongly urge nuclear-weapon States to review their policies in this respect and to confirm the validity of the relevant decisions made by the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences.

The nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes are closely interconnected and interdependent. Positive trends in the field of nuclear-weapon reduction contribute substantially to strengthening the global non-proliferation regime, and vice versa. That is why Ukraine, after giving up its nuclear arsenal, remains committed to attaining the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world and why we share activities undertaken by the New Agenda Coalition group in this direction.

Ukraine welcomes efforts made by the United States of America and the Russian Federation, with a view to bringing the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty into force. Ukraine highly appreciates those efforts and believes that implementation of the Moscow Treaty will pave the way for attainment of the NPT disarmament goals. For its part, Ukraine — as a State that has contributed significantly to the cause of nuclear disarmament within the framework of the Treaty Between the United States of America and the

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START I) — hopes that the reductions in nuclear arsenals under the Moscow Treaty will be irreversible.

In that connection, let me emphasize that, on 30 October 2001, Ukraine completed fulfilment of its obligations in accordance with the first stage of START I implementation by destroying the last silo for SS-24 intercontinental ballistic missiles. We continue to carry out our START I commitments despite difficulties that we faced recently with regard to receiving assistance in liquidating loaded motor cases of SS-24 missiles. Ukraine believes it is important that the non-strategic nuclear weapons reduction process be further pursued and that the existing 1991-1992 regime be strengthened.

In view of the current security challenges stemming from the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials, the issue of concluding the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) has come to the fore. This year's annual session of the Conference on Disarmament has witnessed an important cross-group effort to reach agreement on a programme of work. We express hope that that positive trend will result in practical measures.

One of the past year's most positive events was the establishment of the Group of Eight (G-8) Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, launched at the G-8 Kananaskis Summit. We consider that step to be an essential contribution to enhancing multilateral non-proliferation efforts. We attach great importance to practical realization of the Kananaskis initiative, and we reiterate our readiness to participate actively in it.

The growing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction parallels the spread of ballistic missiles. To curb that negative trend, Ukraine — along with many other States — signed the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation in November 2002. Ukraine is convinced that the elaboration of legally binding international instruments on missile-related issues should take place within a multilateral, universal and non-discriminatory framework.

Ensuring proper implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is one of Ukraine's key priorities in the sphere of non-proliferation and arms control. We believe strongly that a complete ban on chemical weapons and their destruction will contribute greatly to eliminating threats to international security and to global and regional stability. Ukraine calls on all countries that have not yet ratified or signed the Convention to do so as soon as possible. Efforts to strengthen the CWC and to support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons must be continued.

Ukraine fully supports the purposes of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and complies strictly with its obligations under the Convention. Our country submits annually to the United Nations Secretariat necessary information on BTWC implementation within the framework of confidence-building measures. We welcome the decision of the Fifth Review Conference of the BTWC to hold three annual meetings of States parties to the Convention — commencing in 2003 and ending with the Sixth Review Conference — with a view to elaborating new approaches to ensuring full compliance with the Convention's provisions.

The gravity of the problem of small arms and light weapons is illustrated clearly by the fact that such weapons cause more than 90 per cent of all casualties in armed conflicts. The Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2001, is a historic milestone representing the international community's collective will to address such problems. We support the conclusions reached at the first biennial meeting concerning the need to enhance the capacity of local authorities and communities in crisis or post-conflict situations to control illegal weapons and their traffickers and of conducting systematic, action-oriented research on the dynamics of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

As a country that has experienced significant human losses during the conflict periods in its history, Ukraine has shown a clear understanding of, and has devoted due attention to, the problems of countries that continue to suffer from the wide-scale use of mines. Ukraine, a mine-affected country with enormous stockpiles of anti-personnel land mines inherited from the former Soviet Union, has become actively engaged with its partners — particularly Canada — in a project aimed at destroying its stocks of such mines. Following the Framework Arrangement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Ukraine on the destruction of anti-personnel land mines in Ukraine and

the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Maintenance and Supply Organization on logistics support cooperation, a project to destroy 400,000 PMN-type anti-personnel land mines was begun in Ukraine in July 2002. Today, it is with much appreciation that we welcome the successful completion of that project. Although the PMN project is a positive achievement of our common efforts, we should bear in mind that PMN mines constitute only 7 per cent of Ukraine's anti-personnel land mine stockpiles.

The events of 11 September 2001 highlighted the importance of effective export control measures. Ukraine considers it essential that all exporting States assume their responsibilities and take measures to ensure that exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to appropriate surveillance and control. In that context, we support the efforts of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Wassenaar Arrangement to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and, in the case of the Wassenaar Arrangement, to promote transparency and greater responsibility in transferring conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.

Before I conclude, my delegation wishes to pay the highest tribute to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, under the effective leadership of Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe. We are confident that, under Mr. Abe's guidance, the Department will continue to play a supportive role in the service of States Members of the Organization.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): I should like to begin by joining previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this important Committee of the General Assembly. The First Committee has an important role in contributing to international peace and security, and that task is even more important today, when we are facing new security threats. I am confident that, under your leadership, we will have a successful session. I should also like to express support for the statement of the European Union, with which Norway has aligned itself.

The security environment has changed profoundly in recent years. International terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have become major threats to international peace and security. Terrorists take advantage of weak and failed States, where they can operate and plan new, devastating attacks. Afghanistan, before 11 September 2001, is a case in point. We can imagine the horrific implications if terrorist groups gain possession of weapons of mass destruction.

The international community must therefore respond to the new proliferation challenges. Much has been achieved through the United Nations — including the Security Council — and broad-based coalitions. We strongly support the Proliferation Security Initiative and the current efforts of the European Union, as set out in the Declaration of the European Union-Western Balkans Summit, held at Thessaloniki.

Multilateralism is a core principle of arms control and non-proliferation. We must ensure that existing multilateral instruments are sufficiently equipped to meet the new proliferation threats. The First Committee should be a central arena for dealing with these fundamental questions.

Universal adherence and compliance with the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties will provide us with added collective security. Thus, given the new security landscape, we should consider how to further strengthen their enforcement provisions. There must be a heavy price for non-compliance. We are pleased that the Secretary-General raised this question in his report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. We would expect the Security Council to follow up on this challenge.

Norway is particularly concerned that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is under stress. The NPT has for decades been a cornerstone of our collective security and the norms set by the Treaty are even more important today. We must therefore preserve and strengthen the integrity and authority of the NPT. The current review cycle is a good instrument for this purpose and we must do what we can to ensure that the 2005 Review Conference has a positive outcome. We must all contribute to that end and be prepared to make the necessary compromises.

It is important that the 2005 Conference further reinforce the non-proliferation norm through strengthened safeguards. Any nation seeking nuclear technology for peaceful programmes must be obliged to implement the International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA) Additional Protocol to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. It is also essential that the 2005 Conference lead to progress on the disarmament agenda. We welcome the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions as a substantial contribution to reductions in strategic arsenals, but we must advance further and Norway reiterates its call for irreversible reductions in nuclear weapons, including non-strategic weapons.

We sincerely regret that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force, even though this is an obligation under the NPT. We welcome the self-imposed test moratoriums. Such moratoriums cannot, however, replace multilateral, legally binding, verifiable commitments. The recent Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in Vienna showed that the vast majority of nations represented in this room are committed to the Treaty. We must preserve the integrity of the norms set by the CTBT. We are concerned that the development of new weapons may result in the resumption of tests. The nuclear threshold must be retained.

The last NPT Review Conference called for a commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Norway shares the broad international agreement that the cut-off treaty is the next logical step on our multilateral disarmament agenda. We welcome the existing moratoriums declared by some nuclear-weapon States, but a legally binding prohibition provides the best guarantee against the future production of fissile materials for weapon purposes.

The impasse in the Conference on Disarmament has prevented us from moving ahead. Multilateralism has clearly not yet delivered in this case. The Conference has remained passive while new nations have apparently been trying to develop nuclear weapons.

The announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its withdrawal from the NPT is a serious challenge to the authority and integrity of the Treaty. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reverse its course of action, to comply with its obligations under the NPT and to cooperate fully and unconditionally with the IAEA.

The six-party meeting in Beijing at the end of August was an important step towards that end. The dialogue must continue. The aim must be to find a lasting settlement for stability and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region. As a general rule, all matters relating to possible non-compliance with the NPT regime must be dealt with in a multilateral and transparent manner. In any well-documented case of non-compliance, the IAEA must be given access to investigate, draw conclusions and decide on the necessary action in accordance with its mandate. That applies to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as well as to Iran.

The IAEA Board of Governors has sent a clear message to Iran. It should be in Iran's interest to cooperate fully with that United Nations agency. The only way for the country to restore international confidence in its peaceful intentions is to respond to the IAEA resolution of 12 September.

With respect to other types of weapons of mass destruction, we are satisfied with the positive outcome of the First Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) Review Conference, but we have not yet achieved full universalization of that important instrument. Too many countries have chosen not to be bound by CWC obligations. More has to be done on the destruction and eventual elimination of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons. As long as these stockpiles exist, they can fall into the wrong hands.

There is also an urgent need to deal with biological weapons. No one is safe from biological terrorism. We must therefore further reinforce the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol in order to prevent biological agents or toxins from being used as weapons. All nations should adopt and implement adequate national legislation for implementing their BTWC obligations. We must promote full universalization of the Convention.

The Hague Code of Conduct is essential to our overall efforts to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The work for universal adherence to the Code must continue. Our long-term objective should be that the Code is translated into a legally-binding and globally-accepted agreement.

Certain conventional weapons have been described as "weapons of mass destruction in slow motion". Each year, they are responsible for millions of deaths and injuries. Anti-personnel mines, unexploded

ordinance and the proliferation of illicit small arms pose a challenge to human security, a challenge that must be dealt with in multilateral forums. We must work to strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons with a new legally binding protocol on explosive remnants of war and a protocol dealing with the humanitarian challenges posed by anti-vehicle mines.

We also need to implement and further enforce the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This is a most urgent and important task. Norway has supported the efforts to establish a new instrument on tracing and marking. We have also devoted considerable resources to combating the illicit brokering of small arms. We are eager to work with others to achieve concrete progress on these issues.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is a response to an urgent humanitarian challenge. We must renew our political and financial commitment to the Convention. Norway has taken a lead through the establishment of a resource mobilization contact group.

The multilateral approach to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation has been essential to our collective security. This has long served us well, but now new challenges have emerged. We agree with the Secretary-General that the performance of the international community in dealing with new threats and challenges is uneven. We have to be innovative if we are to revive multilateralism and get the international community to work better together.

The United Nations is at the centre of multilateral efforts on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. The General Assembly has played an important role in addressing new topics and setting the agenda for multilateral negotiations. But again, we fully concur with the Secretary-General's view that it should not be shameful or embarrassing to question the adequacy or the efficiency of United Nations bodies.

We welcome consultations on the functioning of the First Committee of the General Assembly. The current format of the general debate prevents us from addressing key security matters and we do not believe that an overcrowded agenda requiring action on more than 50 resolutions and decisions will enhance our collective security. Many of those resolutions are forgotten almost as soon as they are adopted.

The First Committee should focus on major security challenges and promote unity of purpose on addressing new threats. The Committee should serve as an inspiration for the international community.

We are circulating a non-paper today containing ideas that we believe could make the First Committee more relevant, and some suggestions on how to enhance the Committee's role. We believe that the number of resolutions should be reduced, that we should strive to manage our time more efficiently and that we should have more integrated thematic discussions.

We know that other countries have put forward their ideas. We are pleased that there will be open-ended informal consultations after the general debate, and we think they should continue after the current session of the Committee.

An enhanced role for the First Committee will have a positive spin-off for both the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. Our aim is to empower the Conference on Disarmament to do what it is supposed to do: negotiate treaties that enhance our collective security. We now need to reflect on how the Disarmament Commission can provide added value.

The purpose of reforming the multilateral institutions dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation is to make them more relevant in a changing security environment. If we fail to do that, we run the risk of reducing the influence of the United Nations, as well as of multilateralism in general.

We are facing new challenges. We have an opportunity to work better together to meet these challenges. This will strengthen our common security. Let us take this opportunity.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chairman of the First Committee. I also pay tribute to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation looks forward to working constructively with you.

At the outset, I would like to express Iceland's support for the statement made by the Ambassador of Italy, on behalf of the European Union.

We all recall the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan in the General Assembly that we must not shy away from questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments at our disposal. In his agenda for change, the Secretary-General specifically pointed to such problems as the overlapping of items and the need to further rationalize the General Assembly. He also mentioned the energy which goes into the negotiation of resolutions of limited scope and policy impact.

This important Committee should be no exception to the examination that Secretary-General Annan has encouraged the States Members of the United Nations to undertake.

My delegation welcomes your intention, Mr. Chairman, to organize consultations during this session on the organization and working methods of the First Committee. Iceland also welcomes initiatives and proposals which have been submitted by Member States on this issue. We must look closely at ways of improving the tools at our disposal. We should consider a reduction in the number of agenda items and resolutions and more focused thematic debates on strengthening the multilateral approach to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Failure to streamline, in a timely manner, the work of this important Committee — and, indeed, of the Organization as a whole — will risk its marginalization in our fast-moving and dynamic security environment.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a key element in the multilateral effort to slow down the terrifying expansion of weapons of mass destruction. Iceland would like to congratulate Cuba and Timor-Leste on becoming parties to the Treaty, thus further strengthening its multilateral credentials. We would at the same time like to add our voice to those who have called on India and Pakistan to meet all the requirements set out in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998).

An encouraging element in the discussions, held last spring, at the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, was the considerable extent of agreement among Member States on the importance of full compliance by all States with the NPT. The key to this is transparency and the willingness of States which have nuclear capabilities to take action to allay the concerns of other States, where such concerns arise. Iceland therefore aligns itself with those who have expressed concern about the decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to renounce the NPT and to restart its nuclear programme in order to produce nuclear weapons.

In this context, we encourage the Iranian authorities to fully comply with International Atomic Energy Agency's requirements for transparency in the development of their nuclear programme.

Iceland also supports the Proliferation Security Initiative as a practical approach to counter the growing challenge posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Effective measures urgently need to be put in place where they matter.

The risk of major environmental damage from possible nuclear dumping is of particular concern to Icelanders, an island nation much of whose livelihood is based on the living resources of the sea. We reiterate the importance of General Assembly resolution 56/24 L, of 29 November 2001, on the prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes. This item is included on this year's First Committee agenda. It is not enough to avoid the destruction inflicted by nuclear war, vitally important as that is; we must also ensure that appropriate measures are taken to prevent any dumping of nuclear or radioactive wastes which would gradually, through carelessness or criminal activity, wreak terrible destruction in their own way on the world in which we all live.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a vital link in the network of treaties which aim at arresting and reducing the development, manufacture and potential use of weapons of mass destruction. Iceland would like to encourage all Annex 2 States to ratify that important Treaty.

Nuclear weapons are, of course, not the only weapons of mass destruction that pose a threat. Indeed, biological and chemical weapons are in some ways a greater risk as they may be more manageable for terrorist groups. It is therefore encouraging, given the problems encountered last year, that the First Meeting of Experts of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was held in August.

On small arms, we support the proposal of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts to establish an open-ended working group to develop a legally binding instrument on the identification and tracing of small arms. There is still much preparatory

work to be done, not least the elaboration of a United Nations definition of small arms.

Finally, with reference to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, we deplore the ongoing stalemate. Substantive work should be revived from the outset in 2004 and must have a pragmatic focus.

The Chairman: Following an official request by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) to make a statement to the First Committee, I would now like, with the consent of the Committee, to invite Mr. Wolfgang Hoffman, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO, to make a statement.

Mr. Hoffmann (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): First of all, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your very important role in the United Nations.

I am pleased to be here today to report on the activities of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the cornerstones of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Its total ban of any nuclear test explosions in any environment will help end the development of ever-more sophisticated nuclear weapons, as well as arrest the proliferation of these weapons.

When the CTBT was adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996, we were aware that the success of the Treaty would depend on two crucial factors: its universality and its verifiability. On both accounts, we have made substantial progress since then.

As of today, the Treaty has been signed by a total of 169 States and ratified by 105. Thirty-two of those ratifications are by annex 2 States — the 44 States listed in the Treaty whose ratification is required for entry into force. The level and pace of signatures and ratifications indicates the firm support of the international community for the Treaty.

The third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, which was held in Vienna only last month, agreed on concrete measures to promote signatures and ratification of the Treaty. Furthermore, it demonstrated the commitment of States to bringing about the entry into force of the CTBT and to upholding existing testing moratoriums until that time. The Final Declaration of the Conference made ample reference to relevant decisions by the General Assembly and other international forums. Ambassador Greenberg of Finland, the coordinator of the Conference, will brief the First Committee on the details of the Conference during the upcoming thematic debate.

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization was established six years ago to carry out the necessary preparations for the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to prepare for the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty. The main activity of the Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat in recent years has been the establishment of the verification regime to monitor Treaty compliance.

The global verification regime needs to be operational at the Treaty's entry into force. It will be capable of detecting nuclear explosions underground, in water and in the atmosphere.

The International Monitoring System (IMS) consists of 321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide laboratories that monitor the earth for evidence of a nuclear explosion. The IMS uses seismic, hydroacoustic and infrasound monitoring technologies to detect possible nuclear explosions. Radionuclide monitoring technologies collect and analyse air samples for evidence of the physical products created by nuclear explosions. Progress in establishing these facilities has been good, considering the engineering challenges that face the establishment of this first worldwide monitoring network. More than 50 per cent of the monitoring stations are now operational. Good progress in establishing the IMS was made possible in great part by those States hosting facilities. I would like to use this opportunity to thank States for their help and flexibility and to express my hope that the good cooperation will continue.

A Global Communications Infrastructure (GCI) carries the seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide data from facilities to the International Data Centre. This global satellite communications network is also used to distribute data and reports relevant to Treaty verification to the States signatories.

The International Data Center (IDC) in Vienna supports the verification responsibilities of States signatories by providing the products and services needed for effective Treaty monitoring. The Centre receives raw data from monitoring stations around the world, which it processes, analyses and transmits to States for final analysis. Improved software is enhancing precision in locating the events which produce seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound or radionuclide data, and the verification system as a whole is being continuously developed and refined.

On-site inspections as provided for in the Treaty are a final verification measure, and the development of a draft on-site inspections operational manual is a key task for the Preparatory Commission. The Commission is also acquiring inspection equipment and building up a pool of potential inspectors.

While the primary purpose of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty verification regime is to verify compliance with the Treaty effectively, the CTBT verification technologies, IMS data and IDC products have the potential to offer a range of useful civil and scientific applications for sustainable development and the betterment of human welfare. Discussions on the civil and scientific applications of CTBT verification technologies are ongoing, most recently upon invitation of the Hungarian Government in Sopron.

Seismic, hydroacoustic and infrasound data can be used in studies of the Earth's structure and for research on earthquakes, volcanic eruption forecasting, tsunami warnings, underwater event location and sea-temperature and climate-change monitoring. The data can assist in minimizing the effect of volcanic eruptions on civil aviation and can be used for oceanic swell research and atmospheric and meteorological studies. Radionuclide technologies offer opportunities for detecting radionuclide dispersion, monitoring radiation levels and studying natural radioactivity, as well as supporting atmospheric studies, biological research and environmental change tracking. Follow-up meetings and seminars are already taking place amongst policy-makers and scientists in support of the work of the Commission.

The Commission organizes training programmes and workshops in support of States signatories in the enhancement of national technical capability for the implementation of the Treaty. Those include training courses for IMS station operators in all four verification technologies; training courses for data analysis, storage and management; on-site inspection technologies; workshops for global communications infrastructure; and workshops on international cooperation and national implementation of the Treaty. In addition, the Commission promotes international cooperation among States signatories for them to participate in the fullest possible exchange relating to these verification technologies and the establishment and operation of national data centres.

On 15 June 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Agreement to Regulate the Relationship between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, thereby accepting the Preparatory Commission as a new member of the United Nations family. The Commission remains an independent international organization, but has been given formal status by which we can contribute to the goals of the United Nations. CTBTO staff use the United Nations laissez-passer on duty travel. We have concluded a services agreement with United Nations Development Programme, which provides us with operational support.

Under this Agreement, our links and interactions with the United Nations and its programmes, funds and specialized agencies are developing even further, and options for enhanced cooperation and support are under review. In order to fully contribute to the work of the United Nations family, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission has requested full membership in the United Nations System's Chief Executives Board (CEB). The Preparatory Commission already participates in the work of the high-level committees of the CEB, but this participation cannot replace full membership in the main coordinating body. In the light of the disarmament-related issues contained in the Millennium Declaration, we feel it to be particularly important that the CTBTO Preparatory Commission should be able to contribute fully to the work of the United Nations family. We believe that it would be of great significance for the General Assembly to be kept abreast of the rapid development of our new and growing organization on a closer basis. In times of increasing concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the reports of organizations specialized in this field should be of particular relevance to the deliberations of the General Assembly.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that, seven years after its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has the confirmed support of the international community, and is recognized as playing an important role in nuclear disarmament and in non- proliferation. The recently held Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT provided new momentum to our common quest for a universal and verifiable Treaty. I am convinced that the important deliberations of the First Committee will provide further impetus to, and a conducive environment for, further progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Chairman: Before adjourning the meeting, I would simply like to urge delegations to show continued flexibility in terms of the timing of their statements. I do recognize that it is not always easy, especially for New York-based representatives — now that the General Assembly is in session and permanent representatives, deputy permanent representatives and others have to make a great number of statements — to be available for the First Committee, if and when they are needed. I do appreciate the flexibility shown by three delegations today. I hope that will get a faithful following.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/58/PV.6

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

First Committee
6th meeting
Friday, 10 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Jarmo Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Niang (Senegal) *(spoke in French)*: I am pleased to join previous speakers in conveying our delegation's sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and to assure you of the full cooperation of the delegation of Senegal in carrying out the important mission entrusted to you. We also warmly congratulate Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe, to whom we wish great success in his lofty position as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

We are truly living in a dangerous world, where the proliferation of weapons of all sizes and types has reached worrisome levels and where the resurgence of the viper of terrorism once again poses a challenge to the entire international community. At a time when humankind is threatened more than ever before and when there is a need to join efforts to avert those dangers, we stand powerless before a crisis in the disarmament process. That crisis is evidenced by the failure in the work of the Disarmament Commission and the great uncertainties looming over the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament. That situation stems from the adherence to a narrow and selfish logic that makes the possession of weapons of mass destruction a political and diplomatic advantage. It is high time for our troubled world to be guided by the healthy conviction that security is either comprehensive or non-existent. It is also time to begin to foster a frank and direct dialogue on all issues related to disarmament and international security.

Like many other delegations, Senegal believes that the increased dangers in the area of disarmament makes it necessary for us to examine our working methods anew, both within the First Committee and in other forums dealing with the issue of disarmament. The delegation of Senegal also believes that the First Committee should focus on weighty basic issues and, along those lines, consider the biennialization or triennialization of certain resolutions under its purview.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a cornerstone of the international regime for nuclear non-proliferation, is still far from meeting all the desired results agreed upon at the 2000 Review Conference. More than ever before, the universality of the NPT must continue to be a priority, just as the criteria for its verification and irreversibility should be rigorously adhered to. Senegal urges all States that are not yet parties to the NPT to accede to that Treaty as soon as possible. Similarly, my delegation calls for greater accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome the fact that many States that are not parties to the CTBT have nevertheless decided to observe a moratorium on nuclear tests.

We praise the results achieved by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons,

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including its important work in verifying and destroying stocks and its initiative to implement a programme of action on behalf of the African continent.

As for biological weapons, my delegation hopes that the current consultation process on strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention will lead to the adoption of effective, beneficial measures.

I cannot conclude without referring to the destruction caused in Africa, in particular, by anti-personnel mines and small arms and light weapons. With regard to anti-personnel mines, I welcome the valuable support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which has provided many countries with training and has strengthened the management of the socio-economic impact of landmines. My country fully endorses the United Nations mine action strategy for 2001 to 2005, which was clearly set forth by the Secretary-General in his report (A/56/448/Add.1) of 16 October 2001.

Small arms and light weapons, which have both a social and economic impact, continue to be a serious threat to the integrity of many African countries. West African heads of State adopted a few years ago a Moratorium on light weapons, followed by a Code of Conduct, which receives valuable support from UNDP's Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED). In addition, national commissions that have been elevated to the subregional level to help communities fight against the proliferation of these deadly devices. My delegation calls for support for the draft resolution on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them, which will be submitted by Mali on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Mrs. Bonilla Galvão de Queiroz (Guatemala) *(spoke in Spanish)*: First, Sir, I congratulate you on your election to chair the Committee during this session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

We thank the representative of Peru for his detailed statement on behalf of the Rio Group, which we endorse. My delegation, nevertheless, wishes to present some additional reflections on certain issues that we consider relevant, as well as on the overall disarmament and international security situation. We shall, however, refrain from listing points that we all know are priorities on our agenda, nor shall we stress that much still remains to be done.

We find ourselves in a special situation, in that we all share an identical concern, arising from the need to respond to new challenges to international security. As the Secretary-General has observed, it may be that we face not new threats, but, rather, old ones in new and dangerous combinations. Even though new ideas have emerged for confronting these threats, we cannot deny that our final objective, which is to combat them, remains unchanged. That in itself is a step forward in our struggle.

Moreover, we are not starting from scratch. We are all part of one single Organization; we have international instruments at our disposal; we have accepted international law and the rule of law; and, particularly in the area assigned to us, we have available a wide range of disarmament agreements already concluded. We do not need, therefore, to reinvent the wheel. Let us, rather, endeavour with greater vigour to attain the goals that we have already set ourselves in our Organization.

The Committee's work has not remained to the leeward of the winds of reform blowing in the United Nations. We appear to be facing a re-evaluation of our methods and effectiveness. The nature of our Committee should not be changed, since it is the most representative international forum in the area of disarmament and international security. It can, however, be strengthened.

Consequently, bearing in mind that international security demands immediate attention, we should avoid being bogged down in an interminable series of discussions on procedure. Our main focus should be on the quest for the best way to breathe life into the resolutions that are within the Committee's purview. As I have already observed, the nub of the matter is their implementation. We should begin, in the atmosphere of restructuring or revitalizing, to revive our international disarmament mechanism, remembering the benefits of effective collective action, because strengthening the work of the First Committee is intrinsically bound up with the strengthening of multilateralism.

We consider that the problems of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, as well as the promotion of adequate implementation of the existing disarmament regimes, can be addressed only through truly effective multilateralism, which includes strict observance of existing international legal instruments. Interdependence in international security requires that our action be based on the preponderant role of the United Nations.

Before concluding, I wish to comment briefly on two specific matters of special concern to my delegation. First, we reaffirm our commitment to implement both the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We welcome the measures to that end taken at the last two meetings on implementation, held in New York and Bangkok, and continue to take steps for national implementation.

Secondly, we stress that we have been complementing our national efforts by subregional initiatives. At the Central American level, we have taken measures in accordance with the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America. Through the consultation and evaluation mechanisms provided for in the treaty, we are coordinating actions to limit and control armaments in the region. In this respect, I wish to highlight the Agreement for Regional Security, adopted last month at a meeting of the Central American Security Commission, involving a comprehensive programme to limit armaments and promote stability, mutual confidence, transparency and the means to prevent arms from coming into the hands of armed groups operating outside the law.

Finally, we associate ourselves with the appeal to all delegations to intensify their efforts and end the stagnation of the disarmament machinery, thus fulfilling the commitment of some countries to disarm and of others to renounce the possession of arms. Our Committee is the only body that can issue a clear and principled message that, with full respect for the disarmament commitments already assumed, the corresponding undertakings must be strictly observed, and, that their universal observance is the cornerstone of international peace and security.

Mr. Labbe (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first our delegation has taken the floor at this session, let me express to you, Mr. Chairman, our country's congratulations on your election — congratulations that extend to all other members of the Bureau. You can count on our full support in carrying out your important mandate. We are sure that the Committee, under your worthy leadership, will achieve the results that circumstances permit.

I am pleased to take the floor in the general debate of the First Committee at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly on behalf of the 109 States signatory to the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, also called the Hague Code of Conduct. The Hague Code of Conduct — a political instrument to which I shall refer henceforth as the Code — was opened for signature in the capital of the Netherlands on 25 November 2002 after a discussion and negotiation process open to participation by all States concerned by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. The Code's text, which was transmitted to the Secretary-General in a letter dated 30 January 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, has been officially circulated as a document of the General Assembly (A/57/724) under item 66 of the agenda of the fifty-seventh session. The States signatory to the Code, based on their full commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, have pledged to confront security challenges that are leading to — in addition to other phenomena — the ongoing proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.

The Code is a normative benchmark of a political nature, not an international treaty. The obligations that it sets forth — which are politically binding — are designed to strengthen and contribute to the universalization of all multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and mechanisms. We are convinced that adherence to and full compliance with the norms of international disarmament law are essential to building a global environment of confidence.

Thus we, the States signatory to the Code, which is open to all members of the international community wishing to subscribe to it, seek to promote the security of all States by creating mutual confidence through political and diplomatic means. Our objective is to contain and prevent — at the regional and global levels, through multilateral, bilateral and national efforts — proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.

I want to emphasize that we are a group with a clearly multilateral vocation: among us are States representing all continents and all the regional groups recognized within the United Nations system. Developed and developing nations of the North and the South work shoulder to shoulder in the Code. Of the

109 signatory States, 47 are members or observers of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which fact demonstrates the Code's cross-cutting nature.

As a point of departure, we have sought to restrict as much as possible the development, testing and use of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. That also includes — to the extent possible — reducing national holdings of such missiles to promote international peace and security. In addition, we have pledged to take the necessary care to ensure that technical assistance and cooperation do not contribute — even inadvertently — to progress in missile programmes associated with the development of weapons of mass destruction. But that is without prejudice to confirmation of our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries, adopted by the General Assembly through its resolution 51/122 of 13 December 1996. Likewise, we have recognized that States must not be excluded from access to the benefits of space for peaceful purposes.

Finally, we have resolved to implement transparency and confidence-building measures providing information on signatory States' programmes relating to ballistic missiles and expendable space launch vehicles. Such confidence-building measures do not exclude those that have already entered into force between signatory States or those that such States may develop or promote at the regional or bilateral level.

The Code held its second regular meeting of signatory States in New York on 2 and 3 October, in parallel with the commencement of the First Committee's work. During that meeting, we noted with satisfaction our membership's expansion and continued to debate the standardization and qualitative improvement of annual declarations and prior notification of launches of ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles. Moreover, we agreed on a mechanism for the timely circulation of communications related to confidence-building measures. Thus, we are in a phase of gradual development of our political tools, criteria of flexibility chief among them.

Less than a year after it came into existence, the Code is a concrete, living and growing reality with confidence-building measures under way; with a secretariat — our centre for immediate contact — functioning in Vienna; and with a range of promotion and dissemination activities under development. The most recent of those was the outreach seminar organized last week in New York by the outgoing chairmanship, which made possible a useful discussion on the contribution that the Code will make to disarmament achievements.

The Hague Code of Conduct is a normative political response to the threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. However, it is not the only possible response and, as a political instrument, can coexist perfectly with other multilateral initiatives and mechanisms having the same objective. In relating the progress of our activities to the General Assembly, we are motivated both by a spirit of transparency and by the desire to see the greatest possible number of States among our ranks. All those who are genuinely committed to the cause of international peace and security have a natural place among us.

Mr. Memy (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation joins previous speakers in paying tribute to you, Sir, as well as to the other members of the Bureau, on your election.

At the outset, I wish to state that the illicit circulation of and trafficking in small arms is a matter of grave concern to the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As everyone knows, my country is now healing the wounds of a long war, which lasted for more than five years and claimed nearly 4 million victims. Of this war and its dire effects on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, declared at a high-level meeting on 25 September 2003:

> "The Congolese people have experienced one of the bloodiest conflicts in modern history, a conflict in which the entire region has been involved. Millions have been killed or brutalized. In parts of the country, millions still live a precarious existence."

Stemming from that, we need to realize that this bloody war was fostered and fuelled by the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted this with bitterness in its report to the Secretary-General in the framework of the Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to

Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

It is important to emphasize that the Democratic Republic of the Congo supports the appeal made at the Biennial Meeting in New York for practical measures for the collection and the destruction of weapons; the marking and tracing of all small arms; the preparation of a joint strategy on the norms and criteria to combat terrorism and organized crime; the adoption, at the international level, of a law enforcement instrument; and so forth.

The approach adopted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo is based on the fact that the recurrence of armed conflicts is the result of the uncontrolled presence of small arms. More than 100,000 weapons are in circulation in Congolese territory. In order to better coordinate the fight against this scourge, my country has established a National Commission to fight the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. Its tasks are: coordinating, as a focal point, all issues relating to small arms and light weapons, as well as all partnership with, and support from, the national and international community in the framework of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme; implementation of the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on small arms and light weapons; mobilization of international aid, expertise, assistance and cooperation; codification of legislative texts related to small arms and light weapons; and evaluation of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

In that context, bearing in mind the establishment of the general staff of the new structured and integrated army, the Government, through the National Commission, intends to organize a seminar to raise collective awareness of the circulation of small arms and the way in which countries should respond to the objectives of the New York conference. This important seminar should also allow countries to mobilize non-governmental organizations and other actors concerned with the problem of the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms.

So that that important seminar may succeed, the Democratic Republic of the Congo appeals to the Secretary-General and the United Nations Development Programme to assist in this substantial undertaking. On behalf of my delegation, I express my country's gratitude for the assistance given by all donors working, in the context of the Secretariat of the Nairobi Declaration, on questions related to the proliferation and illicit circulation of arms in the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa.

My delegation feels that controlling the circulation of small arms is one way to strengthen the current efforts of the Transitional Government to reunify the national territory, pacify the country, rebuild the infrastructure and restore State authority, which should lead to the holding of free and transparent elections.

My delegation shares the concerns expressed by various delegations about nuclear weapons and terrorism. The Democratic Republic of the Congo firmly condemns all acts of terrorism, which have left our community in mourning, and reiterates its commitment to cooperate with all the countries of our Organization to fight terrorism.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's subsoil is rich in many minerals, some considered to be strategic. During the long years of war, part of Congolese territory was under the control of forces of aggression that supported plundering, exploitation and uncontrolled trade in these natural resources. There is cause for concern about the consequences and damage stemming from those acts, such as abusive use of those resources for terrorist purposes. My delegation therefore urges the international community to support the current peace efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to help the established authorities secure our national borders, thus ending the illegal exploitation of the wealth of our country. That would guarantee lasting peace in our Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa — and why not Africa and the entire world?

Mr. Issa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Sir, at the outset to express my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that you will guide our work to a successful outcome given the outstanding reputation that precedes you.

My congratulations go also to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We are confident that his expertise and objectivity will contribute to enriching the activities and the work of the First Committee. On behalf of the delegation of Egypt, I would also like to pay tribute to his

predecessor as Under-Secretary-General, Jayantha Dhanapala, for his stewardship and contributions during a critical political period for matters of disarmament.

As we meet in the First Committee to consider disarmament and international security issues, we recognize the progress achieved over the past two years; we are also aware of the difficult times that we are facing and the severe challenges to multilateral disarmament endeavours.

Allow me now to address several specific issues. With respect to nuclear disarmament, all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) committed themselves in 2000 to achieving nuclear disarmament, and all of us have accepted the 13 steps that were agreed upon to attain that objective. It should be noted in this connection that the commitment by the five nuclear-weapon States to pursue the elimination of their nuclear arsenals is both a legal and a moral commitment. That is why, on the basis of that commitment, Egypt and its partners in the New Agenda Coalition will be introducing two draft resolutions that address, inter alia, the need to reverse the laxity that has crept into global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts since May 2000. The first, on agenda item 73 (d), is entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: a new agenda" and the second, on item 73 (c), is "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons". While they both convey a similar message in their operative paragraphs, the second stresses the need for reducing non-strategic nuclear weapons as an essential step towards ridding the world of nuclear weapons. In that respect, Egypt associates itself with the statement made by Ambassador Queiroz Duarte of Brazil on behalf of the countries of the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/58/PV.2).

Among the more serious challenges to multilateral disarmament efforts are updated strategic doctrines that set out rationales for the retention, development, deployment and even possible use of nuclear weapons. The impasse encountered at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which has raised questions in many people's minds about the future of the Conference itself, is a clear example of the magnitude of this challenge. The Egyptian delegation welcomes the new ideas that have been put forward during the past year with a view to reaching consensus on a possible 2004 agenda for the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that those efforts and viewpoints will achieve success, although we realize that there is a lack of political will among the members of the Conference and that the current crisis goes beyond procedural matters, because it reflects far deeper problems in the state of international relations and multilateralism regarding the maintenance of international peace and security.

With regard to international efforts in the field of non-proliferation, it is regrettable that this new session of the General Assembly was convened after a year during which the Middle East had witnessed what can be described as an unprecedented level of violence and escalation. Yet we have not seen any serious effort to address the risks of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East region, especially through securing universal adherence to the NPT there, an objective that we seek and that has the support of most Member States and countries party to the NPT.

The danger of nuclear proliferation and the achievement of universal adherence to the NPT in the Middle East region are policy priorities for Egypt. Egypt will continue its efforts to achieve that objective in the General Assembly through a draft resolution that calls for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and through another that calls upon Israel, the only State in the Middle East that has not yet acceded to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty.

Also with respect to non-proliferation, we welcome Iran's stated willingness to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which should enable the Agency's Director General to fulfil the mandate given him by the IAEA Board of Governors. We reaffirm that the non-proliferation regime must address the security concerns of all its members. Otherwise, it will not succeed, and will disintegrate.

Another issue equally pertinent to disarmament and multilateralism is that of missiles. I should also like to recall the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. In our view, the credibility and success of that Code, or any other instrument, will largely depend on the final text of the Code, on its ability to be developed and on the degree of its success in dealing with issues pertinent to the debate on missiles in a balanced and objective manner.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, it is imperative that the United Nations Programme of Action, adopted in 2001, be fully implemented, first at the national level, after which it will be possible to

support regional and international efforts in that field. Furthermore, we welcome the successful outcome of the First Biennial Meeting, chaired by Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, and held here in New York in July, to monitor progress in that respect. Her efforts and expertise contributed greatly to the success of the meeting.

In conclusion, the delegation of Egypt would like to emphasize the need to support United Nations activities in the field of disarmament in all its forms.

As for the reform of the work of the First Committee, this should take into consideration the need for a stable legal framework with regard to the responsibility of the General Assembly in matters of disarmament and international security. The international community should take great care in that respect to maintain the required balance in the United Nations role in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as the required balance among the principal organs of the Organization. We would like to recall that the General Assembly plays a fundamental role in this reform effort, and it alone is capable of providing the necessary legitimacy.

Mr. Chidumo (Mozambique): Allow me at the outset to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to preside over the First Committee. I am confident that under your skilful guidance and outstanding leadership, our deliberations will be crowned with success. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. I would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Ambassador Abe upon his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and to assure him of my Government's full support in the discharge of his duties. I would further like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Chairman, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the deliberation of the Committee during the previous session of the General Assembly.

This year, we are commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the convening of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Instead of being able to hold a true celebration on such an important occasion, however, we find ourselves with every reason to be concerned about the prevailing situation in the field of disarmament. In fact, the Conference on Disarmament has yet to break the stalemate with regard to its programme of work, and substantive work and effective multilateral disarmament negotiations are therefore blocked.

This is very disturbing, particularly at a time when there is increased concern about the likelihood of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists. This attests to the need for a strong multilateral system to promote disarmament and non-proliferation. The effectiveness of the multilateral system in the field of disarmament lies in the universalization and operationalization of existing multilateral agreements related to disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In particular, every effort should be made to ensure the full implementation of the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the full implementation of the Convention on Chemical Weapons, to mention just a few relevant multilateral disarmament agreements.

As a State party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, last year we reaffirmed to the Committee our country's commitment to conclude, by 2003, the process of destroying of all stockpiled mines, in accordance with the provisions of article 4 of that Convention.

In that regard, we are pleased to inform the Committee that in February this year Mozambique finalized the process of destroying those weapons. That process, which began in 2001 with the destruction of the first 500 mines, has resulted in the destruction of 37,818 stockpiled mines in Mozambique.

We are happy to note that at the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Thailand in September, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to the total eradication of anti-personnel mines. We hope that, with concerted action by the international community, we will be able to achieve the ultimate goal of a world free from landmines. It is our hope that the First Review Conference, which is due to take place next year in Nairobi, will result in the adoption of meaningful recommendations which will address this issue in a comprehensive manner.

We are also happy to note that 141 States have so far acceded to the Convention. This represents a step forward towards the universalization of that important instrument. To this end, we urge Member States that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so without delay.

The illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to pose a serious threat to peace, stability and social development in various parts of the world, particularly in the African continent. We are encouraged by the positive results of the First Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July. It provided a unique opportunity for the States parties to exchange experiences about efforts being undertaken at the regional, national and international levels to achieve the noble goal of ending the illicit trade in those weapons throughout the world.

The multiplicity of challenges before the international community in general and the United Nations in particular compels the United Nations to undertake far-reaching reforms at all levels. In this regard, we welcome the ongoing efforts by the Secretary-General to launch a professional-level debate on this issue. As the issue of reform begins to have an impact on the affairs of the First Committee, my delegation stands ready to contribute to the successful outcome of the process.

The Chairman: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to remind delegations to show respect to those who are speaking. If urgent consultations need to take place, representatives should undertake such consultations in a respectful manner.

Ms. Rastovac (Serbia and Montenegro): At the outset, Sir, I would like to congratulate you, on behalf of my delegation, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that your ample experience and professional skills will lead us to the successful outcome of the current session of the Committee. Let me assure you of my delegation's readiness to work closely with you to achieve this goal. I would also like to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

The significance of the United Nations disarmament framework for peace and security in the world has never been more highlighted, particularly in view of the growing threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and the possible acquisition of these types of weapons by terrorists. The link between the proliferation of these weapons, new forms of terrorism and transnational criminal networks poses a real threat to international peace and security, requiring a joint response by the international community.

The 11 September attack, followed by other terrorist attacks around the world, including the terrorist strike against the United Nations offices in Baghdad, directly challenges existing peace and security assumptions, particularly the strength of the disarmament framework.

The international community has at its disposal the means with which to counter these threats. However, their effectiveness will be shaped by our ability to improve the existing agreements on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. To make these mechanisms more effective, we have to make certain that they are universal, fully implemented and coupled with a strong verification regime.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) represents the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. It that respect, its further strengthening should be at the centre of our attention. We should strive to attain the universality of the NPT as a necessary measure for achieving its effectiveness. It is our conviction that. to attain the goals set forth in the NPT, full compliance with the Treaty's provisions is necessary. Serbia and Montenegro, as a State party to the Treaty, is committed to that aim.

We share the views, expressed in many statements during this general debate, that universal implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA safeguards regime should be accorded top priority. At the start of 2002, the Safeguard Agreement with the IAEA was renewed in Serbia and Montenegro, enabling further strengthening of our cooperation with the Agency.

I would particularly like to draw your attention to the issue of safety of nuclear waste. Individual Member States should be supported in their efforts to deal with this issue by ensuring that adequate funds being made available to them. Serbia and Montenegro is taking the necessary steps, with the assistance of international partners, to find a long-term solution to the issue of nuclear waste.

We also support an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The process of ratification of the Treaty is underway in Serbia and Montenegro and will be completed in the near future.

There is a great threat that chemical substances may find their way into the hands of terrorists. In order to prevent this, we have to achieve full universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, the greatest responsibility lies with the States parties to this Convention to fully implement it. Serbia and Montenegro has regularly submitted its reports to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In 2003, we received five inspection teams. At the end of September, in cooperation with the OPCW, chemical weapons production equipment stored at the Trayal Corporation in Krusevac was destroyed.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with the successful completion of the First Review Conference on the Chemical Weapons Convention, held recently in The Hague. The Political Declaration agreed to by consensus and other concrete decisions of member States of the OPCW represent major steps forward towards our common goal, the elimination of chemical weapons.

Serbia and Montenegro considers that full implementation and further strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is a key prerequisite to adequately addressing the threat posed by the dissemination of biological agents or toxins. Successful outcome of the upcoming meeting of the States parties to this Convention will be of utmost importance for the advancement of the Convention's goals.

We also welcome the adoption of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. It is a major step towards strengthening the entire non-proliferation framework. We call on all Members States to subscribe to the Code.

The region of South-East Europe is facing serious challenges and threats caused by terrorism and organized crime. We consider that only the full integration of the countries of the region into European and Euro-Atlantic alliances and the further strengthening of regional cooperation, goals to which my country attaches paramount importance, will create the prerequisites to effectively deal with these security challenges.

Another problem that affects stability in our region is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and its direct connection to organized crime and terrorism. We are of the view that if we seek to resolve this problem, we need to ensure the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, particularly through strengthening export controls and regional and international cooperation. I would like to express our satisfaction with the successful results of the First Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, which demonstrated a strong consensus among the States parties to advance their cooperation at all levels, as well as to undertake additional measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We support the establishment of an open-ended working group to negotiate a legally binding instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons, as recommended by the United Nations group of experts.

Serbia and Montenegro, as a State Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), fully supports the goals set out in the Convention. Furthermore, my country has adopted the legislation to accept the amendment to article 1 of the CCW and has accepted Protocol IV of the Convention.

In August 2003, my country deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General an instrument of ratification for the Ottawa Convention, thereby joining the family of nations seeking to eliminate landmines, a highly dangerous type of weapon that causes harm and loss of life to civilians. Landmines represent a grave problem to my country, in view of the fact that, according to the estimates, as many as 10 million square meters in Serbia and Montenegro are contaminated by mines. Therefore, we need financial assistance to address this issue in an adequate and timely fashion, since this problem has long-term humanitarian consequences.

In addition, we are cooperating with donor countries to deal with the issue of mine stockpiles. According to the official data, there are 1,322,641 mines in stockpiles in my country. A project is currently under way to destroy part of those stockpiles, but additional resources are necessary. We call upon the donor countries to extend financial support to this effort.

Let me conclude by expressing our support to your initiative to improve the efficiency of the work of the First Committee. We hope that, during the current session of the Committee, we shall be able to jointly find a way to improve its work, so that it can respond more efficiently to the new challenges that the international community is facing today in the field of disarmament and international security.

Ms. Taguiang (Philippines): We join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and we also congratulate the other members of your Bureau. The Philippine delegation is confident that your vast experience will guide this year's work of the First Committee to a productive and meaningful conclusion.

May we also take this opportunity to welcome to the First Committee the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe. The Philippine delegation is convinced that Under-Secretary-General Abe will continue the efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, in furthering the cause of disarmament and international security.

My delegation associates itself with the statement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to be delivered subsequently by the delegation of Myanmar, and would now just like to briefly refer to points of national interest in our statement.

The Philippines shares the concern of other delegations about the lack of progress in the multilateral arena of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are particularly concerned about the following points.

First, there is the difficulty of moving on with nuclear disarmament under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We note that three years after the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, the collective and unequivocal commitment of nuclear-weapon States to the transparent, accountable and verifiable elimination of their nuclear arsenals remains largely unrealized. The decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to withdraw from the NPT and restart its nuclear weapons development programme is a further cause for concern.

Our second concern involves the failure of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to enter into force despite its ratification by a growing number of countries. The Philippines reiterates its call on States that have still not done so — particularly those whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to enter into force — to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Our third concern is about the unsuccessful efforts in the Conference of Disarmament to arrive at an agreement on its programme of work for the past seven years, which has stalled negotiations on such important disarmament issues as a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Our fourth concern has to do with the continued lack of consensus, despite the discussions held over the years in the Disarmament Commission, on the objectives and agenda for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is indeed lamentable that there has been no progress in arriving at consensus to move ahead with the convening of the special session.

Those concerns in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation have further been aggravated by the growing possibility of terrorist actions that may involve the use of weapons of mass destruction.

The realities I have cited may seem daunting, but they should not prevent us from effectively pursuing our work in the First Committee. The Philippines remains convinced that for us to respond effectively to those concerns, we would need to strengthen negotiations in the multilateral sphere. We also reiterate our view that by focusing on a common end, we narrow the differences in our approaches.

The Philippines remains steadfast in its commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As part of that commitment, the Philippines signed, in April 2003 at Vienna, a facility agreement with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. The agreement governs the operation and maintenance of our contribution of three facilities to the international monitoring system.

In April of this year, the Philippines also held a seminar on chemical weapons prevention, which was led by representatives of the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons. As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Philippines is about to begin the process of enacting implementing national legislation for the Convention.

Last year, the Philippines also subscribed to The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile

Proliferation. The Philippines shares the view of other subscribing States to the Code of Conduct that the Code is a step towards the integration of ballistic missiles in the area of multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Philippines will also continue to work hand in hand with our partners in the Association of South-East Asian Nations to pursue consultations with the nuclear-weapon States to ensure the effective implementation of the South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. The Philippines also supports the efforts to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, which it views as a positive development in regional arms control and disarmament.

Weapons of mass destruction are not the only threats to international peace and security. The world is equally threatened by the proliferation of other deadly weapons, specifically small arms and light weapons and landmines. The proliferation and uncontrolled spread of those weapons pose a serious threat to peace, security and safety, especially for developing countries' sustained economic growth and development. The illicit trafficking in those weapons has also led to armed conflict in many parts of the world, adversely affecting millions of innocent civilians, most of them women and children.

In that regard, the Philippines considers as a step in the right direction the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 by the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Philippines participated actively in the First Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held last July. During that meeting, we stressed the need for closer linkages between national implementation, regional initiatives and global action to ensure meaningful implementation of the Programme of Action.

One of the major steps undertaken by the Philippines in addressing the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is the sustained enhancement of our stockpile-management capabilities. The Philippines also has in place specific regulations that not only serve as effective tools in addressing that concern but which also substantially conform to the Programme of Action.

The Philippines is also creating safety nets to protect children from the adverse effects of illicit small arms and light weapons. As part of that long-term strategy to address the humanitarian costs and consequences of small arms proliferation, my country is undertaking a comprehensive programme for children in armed conflict.

Finally, the Philippines shares the view of many delegations about the need for comprehensive reform in the United Nations. While we support efforts aimed at reinvigorating both the General Assembly and the First Committee to allow them to respond more effectively and more efficiently to the challenges that confront us now and that we will have in the future, we also believe that existing commitments already in place in the areas of disarmament and international security should be respected.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Although I feel a little marginalized here, it is a great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that, under your able guidance, the Committee will achieve optimum results. You can count on our cooperation. I also take this opportunity to express Pakistan's sincere appreciation for Uganda's skilful guidance of the Committee last year. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and we assure him of our full cooperation in promoting the agreed goals of disarmament.

The Committee's debate on disarmament is taking place at a difficult moment for the promotion of peace and security. First, there has been serious erosion in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly as regards the use or threat of use of force. Secondly, the concept of "equal security", which was approved at the first special session devoted to disarmament and which flows from the concept of the sovereign equality of States, has been severely damaged. Asymmetry in power and wealth is growing, reinforcing the tendency of the more powerful States to resort to the use of force and the tendency of the weak to respond with asymmetric means.

Equal security was to be promoted primarily through general and complete disarmament, both in the conventional and the non-conventional spheres. The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was an interim measure, with the ultimate aim of complete nuclear disarmament. Chemical weapons and biological

weapons were to be totally banned. And conventional armaments were to be controlled, especially in the regional context.

Those objectives have been perverted, if not subverted. General and complete disarmament is today dismissed as utopian. Nuclear disarmament is given lip service, especially at the review conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). But, in practice, the nuclear-weapon States display no intention of giving up their nuclear weapons, now or at any time in the foreseeable future. Thousands of nuclear weapons are retained, and new war-fighting nuclear weapons are being developed.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has become the primary and urgent goal; but it is pursued selectively. Some States cannot pursue peaceful nuclear cooperation, while others are helped in promoting unsafeguarded nuclear programmes, building and refining missile and anti-missile systems and allowed to accelerate vertical nuclear proliferation, including in regions of tension.

While real nuclear threats — the existence of dangerous disputes among nuclear-armed States — are being ignored, an attempt is being made to focus attention on the possible danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors and terrorist groups.

Military expenditure has meanwhile increased. According to the latest Stockholm International Peace Research Institute report, the current level of world military expenditure is 14 per cent higher in real terms than it was at the post-cold war low of 1998. Huge and aggressive military arsenals are being built up by a few States — often working in collaboration — while weaker States are often coerced to disarm and give up the potential for the development of any credible means of self-defence.

The Conference on Disarmament and other disarmament mechanisms are paralysed — not because of the intransigence of the non-aligned countries, but because some major Powers are unwilling to allow negotiations to be opened on the issues of highest priority — that is, nuclear disarmament. Nor are they willing to address present and future threats to global security emanating from the development of new war-fighting nuclear weapons; the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missiles systems; and the ongoing weaponization of outer space. They are willing to negotiate only on issues that they see as threatening their own security: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile capabilities — and on those issues, too, they make exceptions for and give special treatment to their own allies and strategic partners.

A huge legal and political dichotomy has emerged in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. While the NPT recognizes only five nuclear-weapon States, there are, today, actually eight — if not nine — nuclear-weapon States. That dichotomy needs to be resolved. It can be resolved only in the context of a process of nuclear disarmament by all nuclear-weapon States.

Non-proliferation can succeed only if the underlying security concerns of States are effectively addressed. As we have seen in recent days, unilateral and selective efforts to impose nuclear non-proliferation have resulted in the exacerbation of the proliferation threat, heightened tensions in the regions concerned and the increased danger of the use of force.

Presumptions — based on questionable intelligence information — about the possession by Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, for example, have proved to be unfounded so far, demonstrating the danger of the doctrine of pre-emptive and coercive non-proliferation.

Unfortunately, such realities are not reflected in the assessments and prescriptions proposed by the major Powers, by the New Agenda Coalition, or even by the United Nations.

It seems essential, therefore, to evolve a new consensus with regard to the entire gamut of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation issues, based on the principles of the Charter and global agreements, especially the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament. A partial and self-centred agenda imposed by the major Powers is a recipe for increased international insecurity and continued deadlock in disarmament negotiations.

The best approach to disarmament and non-proliferation today, as in the past, would include the following elements. First, internationally agreed non-discriminatory treaties and agreements should be negotiated, their observance being promoted through specific mechanisms designed for that purpose. Secondly, the underlying security concerns of States — concerns that motivate them to seek weapons of mass

destruction and other advanced weapons system — should be removed. Thirdly, the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and missiles should be promoted, through cooperation, by the militarily significant States, working simultaneously to achieve equitable non-proliferation. Fourthly, incentives — not just disincentives — should be provided for the acceptance and implementation of non-proliferation obligations.

Pakistan reluctantly acquired a nuclear weapon and missile capability in order to deter aggression from our traditional adversary, India, only after India had acquired and tested its nuclear weapons and declared itself a nuclear-weapon State. It is not in Pakistan's strategic interest to allow the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries.

We share the concern that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction could destabilize the global security environment, especially in certain sensitive regions of the world. Pakistan is prepared to work as a partner in halting proliferation. However, unreasonable demands, such as those relating to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) — which was adopted without our participation — while the existing nuclear-weapon States retain their nuclear weapons, are unacceptable and unrealistic. Pakistan's special strategic compulsions — especially the threat from our neighbour, India — need to be understood and accommodated.

While the situation in South Asia is different, Pakistan has committed itself not to erode the basic goals of the NPT. We would be prepared to give an explicit commitment that Pakistan will continue to act in conformity with the obligations undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States under articles I, II and III of the NPT so as to prevent any further nuclear proliferation.

Consistent with its obligations as a nuclear-weapon State, since February 2000 Pakistan has formally instituted an elaborate nuclear command and control mechanism so as to put in place ironclad custodial controls. The National Command Authority, chaired by the President, oversees these custodial controls of all assets, including strategic weapon components and fissile material. Those controls are aimed at ensuring the total elimination of the risks of leakages of either material or technology, and at preventing accidental or unauthorized launch. A Strategic Command Force, established in each of the three armed services, ensures that our strategic weapons are never used unintentionally, accidentally or without due authorization. Further special security and safety measures have also been adopted to prevent the mischievous seizure of those assets and to make it impossible for any of them to fall into the wrong hands. We are fully prepared to deal with multidimensional threats to our strategic assets at any cost.

Pakistan is a party to the international conventions banning chemical and biological weapons. We are committed to fulfilling our obligations under those conventions fully and faithfully.

Pakistan believes that the implementation of the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention should be achieved through the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. For Pakistan, a major priority is to secure the verified destruction of the chemical weapons which India declared when it ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. Until India's stocks of chemical weapons are destroyed, Pakistan will need to factor the threat of a chemical weapon attack into any conflict with India. Pakistan also continues to cooperate with international efforts to control the destructive flow of chemical weapons and their precursors.

Arrangements to verify the ban on biological weapons have not been formalized, despite best efforts by States parties. We are willing to work with the concerned States to develop agreed and non-discriminatory means, consistent with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, to prevent the clandestine development of biological weapons by any State. However, we do not believe that such verification responsibilities for weapons of mass destruction should be entrusted to the Security Council, because its functions relate mainly to the maintenance of peace and security, and because the rights and obligations of States in the Council are unequal between the five permanent members and other States. Such an effort would undermine the credibility of existing treaty regimes. We should work instead to strengthen disarmament treaties and, where necessary, to improve their verification mechanisms, including compliance with those treaties.

Pakistan also shares global concerns regarding unrestrained ballistic missile proliferation. We are willing to cooperate in developing universally negotiated, non-discriminatory measures to avert

missile proliferation. We have noted independent initiatives, such as the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, taken on the issue of missiles. A considerable number of so-called missile-active States are still outside its fold. Pakistan cannot accept discriminatory restraints, especially those not accepted by our neighbour India or those which would prevent Pakistan from ensuring the credibility of our deterrence posture.

Pakistan understands concerns regarding the threat of acquisition by terrorist groups of weapons of mass destruction. In that context, the universal acceptance and implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material is important. Programmes to ensure protection of "loose nukes" and of inadequately protected fissile materials are useful. Pakistan has taken all possible national measures to ensure the safety and security of our nuclear and missile assets. We are prepared to participate in the elaboration of internationally agreed measures to prevent terrorists from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. Pakistan therefore proposes the convening of a meeting of technical experts dealing with weapons of mass destruction to evaluate the reality of this alleged threat.

Our deliberations should also focus on the fact that the threat of terrorists' acquiring chemical and biological weapons is relatively much greater than the threat of their acquiring nuclear weapons. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons can be strengthened to address the chemical-weapon threat. On biological weapons, special arrangements could be considered pending finalization of a multilateral agreement.

Pakistan desires an early resumption of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral forum mandated to negotiate and conclude, on the basis of consensus, legally binding arms control and disarmament instruments that contribute to the maintenance of peace and security at the minimum level of armaments, on the basis of undiminished and equal security for all States. The following four issues, in our view, should constitute the core agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

The first issue is nuclear disarmament. Negotiations on that priority item cannot be frozen out of the Conference on Disarmament's work programme indefinitely. The nuclear-weapon States of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons. That commitment needs to be operationalized.

The second issue is that outer space must be effectively insulated from an arms race and from weapons of mass destruction. Negotiations on that issue are also important to remove the current gridlock in the Conference on Disarmament.

The third issue is the conclusion of a universal, comprehensive, non-discriminatory and verifiable fissile material treaty which will be an instrument of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The fourth issue is the conclusion of a legally binding international instrument on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Such an instrument could be another confidence-building measure in providing credible guarantees against the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In the event that other issues are brought into the negotiating work programme of the Conference on Disarmament, Pakistan will seek priority for conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. The General Assembly has repeatedly asked the Conference on Disarmament to formulate principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control. We are encouraged to note that the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is in the process of implementation. We are also encouraged to see that the work within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is progressing satisfactorily.

We appreciate the desire and interest of the international community with regard to preserving and strengthening peace and security between Pakistan and India. Pakistan has proposed the adoption of a strategic restraint regime for South Asia, compromising three interlocking elements: first, agreed and reciprocal measures for nuclear and missile restraint to prevent deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons; secondly, the establishment of a conventional arms balance as a confidence-building measure between the two countries; and thirdly, the establishment of a political mechanism for resolving bilateral conflicts, especially the core dispute over Jammu and Kashmir.

It should be a matter of grave concern to the international community that there is no operational

understanding between India and Pakistan for the management of their nuclear relations. India has announced — and is steadily implementing — its dangerous nuclear doctrine envisaging the development and deployment of a triad of nuclear weapons on land and sea and in the air. The Prithvi short-range missile has been deployed; the Agni series of medium-range missiles is in the process of being deployed. The Brahmos naval cruise missiles and nuclear-capable submarines being acquired by India will create a second-strike capability. While professing adherence to a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons, India's doctrine provides that, "in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons". The acquisition of anti-ballistic-missile systems and of advanced early-warning systems — such as the Israeli-supplied Phalcon — will increase India's first-strike options.

Pakistan does not wish to enter into a nuclear or strategic arms race with India. But we shall take all necessary measures to ensure the credibility of our strategic deterrence against any use or threat of use of force against our territory or our strategic assets or facilities.

To preserve the stability of strategic deterrence in South Asia, Pakistan's proposals for reciprocal nuclear and missile restraint deserve urgent consideration. Those proposals include: first, a bilateral moratorium on further nuclear-weapons testing; second, maintenance of nuclear weapons on a de-alert status — as a matter of policy, Pakistan does not presently keep its missiles mated with nuclear warheads; third, non-deployment of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles; fourth, formalization of the understanding to provide prior adequate notification of missile flight tests; fifth, acceptance of a moratorium on the acquisition and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile systems; sixth, other confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons by miscalculation or accident; and seventh, discussion of each other's nuclear security doctrines to avoid a regional nuclear and missile arms race.

The second element of the strategic restraint regime that we have proposed is the maintenance of a balance in conventional weapons. India's defence budget has increased almost 100 per cent over the past five years, while Pakistan's has remained frozen. India's arms purchases will amount to more than $100 billion over the next few years. The provision of certain advanced weapons systems to India — such as Patriot-3 anti-missile systems, the Israeli Phalcon airborne early warning aircraft and Green Pine radar and Russian nuclear submarines and an aircraft carrier — threatens to erode the conventional balance. We urge India's arms suppliers to exercise self-restraint.

A conventional arms imbalance will increase the threat of Indian aggression against Pakistan. Indian political and military leaders already talk about limited war, hot pursuit and pre-emptive strikes against Pakistan. Almost all of India's military forces of more than 1.5 million people and all its military assets are deployed permanently against Pakistan. A conventional imbalance will also lower the nuclear threshold in South Asia.

Pakistan proposes the following reciprocal measures in the conventional field to preserve strategic stability: first, the maintenance of an acceptable ratio in the armed forces of India and Pakistan; second, restrictions on the introduction of heavy weapons within certain border zones; third, further limits on the size and deployments in military exercises; fourth, explicit renunciation of dangerous concepts like limited war, surgical strikes, or hot pursuit; fifth, ensuring that neither country has the capacity to launch surprise attacks; sixth, an understanding on non-deployment of ballistic missiles; seventh, non-acquisition of weapons systems that could destabilize the strategic balance in the region, especially missile defences; and eighth, an eventual agreement on the non-use of force or a non-aggression pact.

Finally, for durable peace in South Asia, it is imperative that a serious and sustained political dialogue be conducted in a composite fashion to resolve the underlying causes of conflict and confrontation. An early solution to the Jammu and Kashmir dispute holds the key to peace and security in South Asia. On 24 September, in the General Assembly, President Musharraf of Pakistan proposed an action plan for peace between India and Pakistan — including the opening of a bilateral dialogue; a reciprocal ceasefire along the Line of Control; cessation of violence within Indian-occupied Kashmir by Indian forces and Kashmiri freedom fighters; enhanced monitoring of the Line of Control on both sides; and the maintenance of a balance of arms, both conventional and unconventional, between the two countries. Unfortunately, India summarily rejected Pakistan's action plan. For peace, we hope that India would yet reflect and respond

positively to the constructive proposals of the President of Pakistan.

The international community must encourage such a positive response for the sake of justice and human rights of the Kashmiri people, for the sake of peace and security in South Asia and for the sake of the noble goals of global disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Mr. Paclisanu (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)): The recent Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, in Bangkok, provides an inspiring example of the potential for addressing arms issues multilaterally when clear issues of life and death are being considered and efforts are deeply rooted in international humanitarian law.

The Bangkok meeting brought together most of the 136 States parties to the Convention, as well as nearly all major mine-affected countries and all major organizations involved in clearance, mine awareness, victim assistance and advocacy around the world. On top of this, it also gathered a considerable number of States not yet parties to the Convention, particularly from the Asian region. The successes of the Convention are evident. According to the 2003 Landmine Monitor Report, 30 million mines have been destroyed by States parties; stockpile destruction deadlines were met by all States whose deadlines had elapsed; a massive reduction of mine casualties has been achieved where the Convention is being implemented; and a high level of political and resource mobilization is continuing to ensure that the job is completed.

Adherence in the past year by Afghanistan and Angola, two of the most mine ravaged countries, and by Greece, Turkey and Belarus — the last of which possesses some 4.5 million anti-personnel mines — were significant steps on the path to universalization.

Parties to the Convention also addressed future challenges and began laying the basis for a successful Review Conference in Nairobi in December 2004. Mine-affected States were urged to present, before the Review Conference, plans, priorities and needs assessments for implementing mine action programmes within the Convention deadlines. All parties were called upon to prepare plans, before the Review Conference, for the sustained mobilization of resources. The need for increased resources, particularly to fulfil the Convention's promises to landmine victims, was highlighted. The International Committee of the Red Cross commends States parties to the Convention for this impressive record and calls on all States that are not yet parties to consider adherence to the Convention before the 2004 Review Conference.

The ever-growing global problem of explosive remnants of war deserves equally committed and urgent action by the international community. Next month's negotiations on a new international instrument in the context of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons will be a crucial test of States' commitment to reducing the unacceptable levels of post-conflict death and injury from explosive remnants of war. The ICRC urges States parties to come to these negotiations prepared to conclude a legally-binding protocol that will include strong and effective obligations to clear, or assist in the clearance of, explosive remnants of war, to provide the information needed by organizations conducting clearance or risk — education programmes, to warn civilians of the presence of explosive remnants of war and to provide assistance to victims. The protocol should also promote, in our view, the adoption of measures to minimize the problem in future conflicts, including technical measures to prevent munitions from becoming explosive remnants of war and correct practices for the handling and transport of munitions.

Recent armed conflicts have demonstrated the urgency of the problem of explosive remnants of war. Each new conflict adds years, if not decades, to the burden of clearance and diverts resources needed to address the already overwhelming problems of currently affected areas. The human costs of remnants of war will continue to escalate as the means to deliver huge quantities of munitions proliferate. States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons must take the opportunity of the November negotiations to stop and reverse that trend. The world cannot afford the costs of the ever-increasing burden of explosive remnants of war. New generations of victims must not pay the price with their lives or limbs because of a lack of consensus on how to proceed or because of a weak instrument.

The unregulated availability of arms, in particular small arms and light weapons, remains a continuing

concern for the ICRC. As we have stated previously, the implications for civilian populations, for respect for international humanitarian law and for the delivery of humanitarian assistance are grave. The recent First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons highlighted not only the important work that has begun nationally, regionally and internationally, but also the need for more effective action. We urge all States to enact measures to ensure that their arms transfer laws and policies take into account respect for international humanitarian law. We also encourage States to focus more closely on the elements of the United Nations Programme of Action which address the demand for and use of small arms, including through measures such as the training of those who bear arms in international humanitarian law.

The ICRC launched its Appeal on Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity a year ago. While we fully recognize the huge potential of biotechnology, we have doubled our efforts to raise awareness of the increasing risks it may pose for international norms against poisoning and the deliberate spread of disease. Our outreach has extended to the scientific and medical communities, the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries, parliaments and the general public. Our work with Governments has included a written contribution to the August meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, and consultations hosted by our President on a proposed ministerial declaration on preventing the use of biological agents for hostile purposes. Such a high-level political declaration would reaffirm existing norms, reinforce efforts within the Biological Weapons Convention framework and highlight the responsibilities of science and industry. It would also support a variety of preventive actions commensurate with the risks posed by rapidly developing capacities for misuse of biological agents. We invite all interested delegations to contact us with regard to these efforts.

Finally, in December the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent will bring together all the States parties to the Geneva Conventions and all national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as their International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross. One of the four main subjects to be considered will be arms and international humanitarian law, including all of the issues to which I have referred today.

We believe that the arms issues proposed for consideration are of particular urgency. They highlight the relevance of international humanitarian law and relate to fields in which action by the International Conference can make a real difference. Success in the elaboration of the Conference's Agenda for Humanitarian Action in the arms field will depend upon the capacity of all participants to consider these issues, not only from a pure arms control perspective, but also from the viewpoint of the victims, who, most frequently, happen to be civilians. It will challenge us to consider arms issues in the light of the interests of humanity as a whole and in view of the universal responsibility to protect human dignity. We look forward to working with the Committee in this effort.

The Chairman: We have concluded the first week of our general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I took the floor on Wednesday at 11.30 a.m. on the issue of the better use of the time available to this Committee. I commend your efforts, Mr. Chairman, to make sure that the speakers' lists for each day are as full as possible. Thanks to the Ambassador of Pakistan, who took considerable time, we have managed to make the meeting last until noon. However, an hour will still be wasted.

I still do not fully understand the mechanics. If we have 100 speakers and spread them out evenly over 10 meetings, allowing 10 minutes for each, then something is wrong; each day time will have been allocated that is not used. If we do the arithmetic in that way, we will end up with incomplete meetings.

I have noted that we had no full days scheduled this week, the argument being that we were meeting back to back with the Fourth Committee. I have not seen many Fourth Committee meetings this week. I wonder, therefore, why the available afternoons could not have been put to use.

Of course, if there is a concrete rule that we must meet for two weeks for the general debate and that that period cannot be shortened, then we will evenly spread out the number of statements to be made. But many of us have delegations from our capitals and from Geneva of five people exclusively dedicated to the First Committee, who would like to put their time to good use.

I would like next week, when we discuss the efficiency of the Committee's work, to reiterate these points. For the time being, I repeat that I am disappointed that we are going to waste another hour now, because I felt, Mr. Chairman, that you were in the process of wrapping up the meeting.

The Chairman: The secretariat has been making repeated attempts to invite delegations to move their statements forward. We were successful yesterday with three delegations and today with one delegation. The International Committee of the Red Cross was also kind enough to make its statement today.

Unfortunately, we remain in the hands of Member States for this flexibility. As I noted yesterday, delegations whose statements are made by representatives from Geneva can devote themselves full-time to the proceedings of the First Committee. This is somewhat easier than for New York-based delegations, whose Permanent Representatives have a hectic schedule, making statements not only in the First Committee, but in the plenary and maybe other Committees as well. We will continue to make efforts so that next week we can make full use of the resources available to the Committee.

As things stand, we most likely do not need Friday for the general debate. It is also likely that on Thursday there will be very few speakers, in which case, hopefully, we will have full meetings on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and on Thursday we can start with a short formal meeting and then go immediately into the informal mode to start our informal exchange of views on our work. I again wish to reassure the representative of the Netherlands that every effort is being made in this regard.

As regards our back-to-back meetings with the Fourth Committee, I note that the Fourth Committee will be meeting this afternoon. It did not meet yesterday afternoon, and unfortunately I am not privy to the reasons. This is one of the issues that can be discussed exhaustively next week.

As I mentioned at our organizational meeting on Monday last week, the possibility of the First and Fourth Committees meeting sequentially, rather than back-to-back, morning and afternoon, would be one issue to discuss. I hope that delegations will come to our meeting next week with fresh ideas in this regard. I do not want to in any way pre-empt next week's discussion, or prejudge its outcome. But, in my General Assembly practitioner's view, it would be possible to deal with our back-to-back work with the Fourth Committee as follows.

Should the First Committee continue to wish to begin its work on the Monday immediately following the conclusion of the General Assembly general debate, we might envisage a timetable whereby we could meet full-time, morning and afternoon, for one week. This would of course mean that, provided no new conference resources were placed at the Main Committees' disposal, the Fourth Committee would have to start a week later than is the case currently. It would then be the only Main Committee of the General Assembly to start a week late. At that point, in the light of our own work and the need for some space to be left for proper consultations among delegations, we could maybe meet the way we are meeting currently, back-to-back.

As I said, I do not want to prejudge next week's meeting in any way. What I have said is simply to highlight one practical issue for discussion and a possible practical solution, on which, of course, we will have to consult not only within this Committee but also with our colleagues from the Fourth Committee. We shall also need to make sure that this is doable in terms of conference services.

I hope that I have been able to provide an answer to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): Mr. Chairman, to a certain extent you have. But I understand that, historically, the First Committee starts its work in the week after the general debate in the General Assembly, while other Committees, including the Fourth, can start their debates in the same week as the general debate in the General Assembly ends. That is what I have been told by people who have been in New York for a very long time. So the Fourth Committee could start earlier than the First Committee and clear a number of its meetings before the First Committee has even convened, because it is a tradition that the First Committee starts after the general debate in the General Assembly. That is another consideration that we might take into account when we discuss back-to-back matters.

I know, Mr. Chairman, that you are committed to making the best use of our time; what I said was not meant as a criticism of you. But we need to look thoroughly at the system and how it works, certainly in the week before the meetings, when their framework is being made and when speakers are allocated to certain

time slots, either in the first week or the second week. Maybe they could all be accommodated in the first week; if Permanent Representatives in New York knew this in a timely manner, they could take this into account when they drew up their calendars. But maybe they had the choice of the second week, which might not even have been necessary.

But let us not make a point of this at this stage, although we have sufficient time — we have until 1 o'clock. Let us keep this point in mind when we discuss the more efficient functioning of this Committee, hopefully, by the end of next week.

The Chairman: As there are no more speakers on this issue, I shall make some comments about next week's work.

First, I remind all delegations that the deadline for submission of draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security agenda items is 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 15 October. Delegations are urged to kindly submit their draft resolutions as soon as possible, in order to enable the secretariat to make them available as official documents of the Committee in all six official languages for the second phase of its work.

As regards the preparation for the second phase of the Committee's work — the thematic discussion on item subjects and the introduction and consideration of draft resolutions — I plan to provide the Committee with an indicative timetable for the structured discussion of specific subjects as soon as possible, following consultations with my fellow Bureau members later today.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.